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# HISTORY of WAR

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OFFENSIVE  
LESSONS OF VIET  
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"KOREA WAS A  
VITAL CLASH"

British veteran's memories  
of the 'forgotten' war

PLUS:

RAF 'NIGHT FIGHTER ACE'  
VICKERS VIMY BOMBER  
WWI TANK DEBATE

# BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Expert reveals German commando tactics  
& the 10th Armored heroes of Bastogne

## BATTLE OF EYLAU

Blow-by-blow of Napoleon's  
bloody winter campaign

## SUBMARINE VC

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1915 raid against Ottoman ships



ISSUE 075

BBG123

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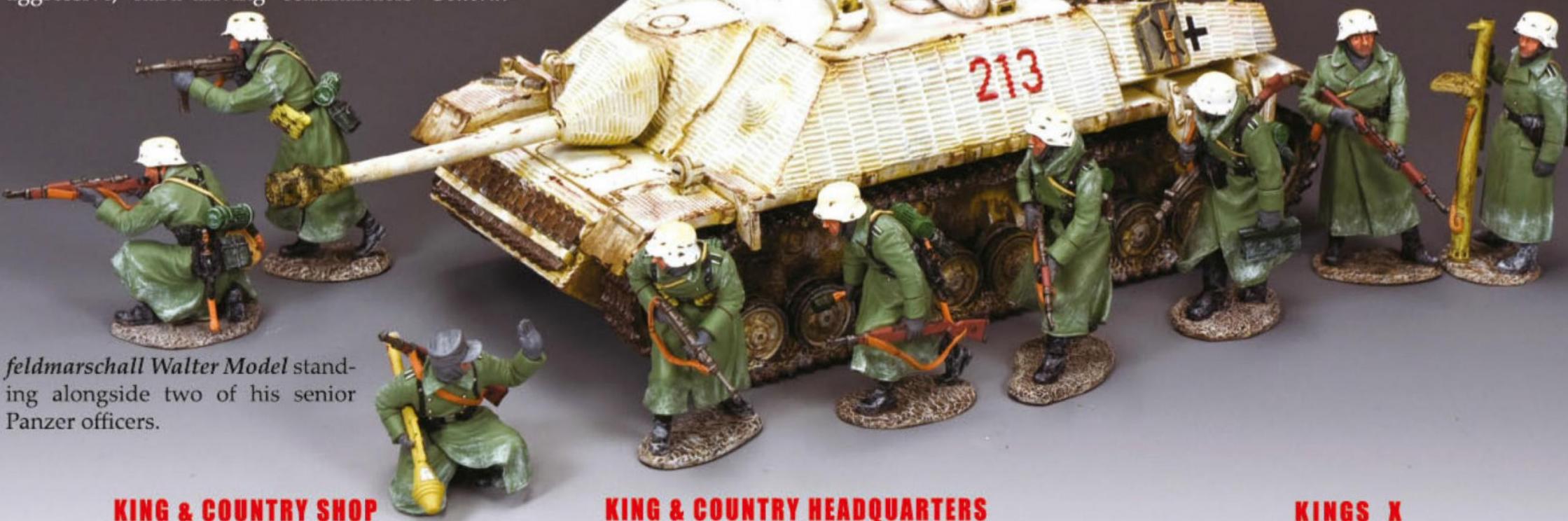


support in the depths of a cold, hard, bleak winter.

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(Winter Version)*



*feldmarschall* Walter Model standing alongside two of his senior Panzer officers.

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Image: Getty

An M-10 Tank Destroyer, advancing with its turret reversed, moves past another gun carriage which slid off an icy road in the Ardennes Forest during the push to halt advancing German troops during the Battle of the Bulge

# Welcome

In December 1944 Allied forces in France, Belgium and the Netherlands were preparing to dig in and keep warm in the horrendously cold conditions. But the first Christmas of the newly opened western front would be anything but peaceful – to the east, thousands of German soldiers were gearing up for an immense offensive to knock the Allies back into the sea. Swallowed up in the middle of the Battle of the Bulge was the town of Bastogne. The defence of the 101st Airborne here has since taken on almost mythic status, however as expert on the battle Martin King explains, they did not stand alone.

**Tim Williamson**  
Editor-in-Chief



## CONTRIBUTORS

### TOM GARNER

This issue Tom spoke with Korean War veteran Neville Williams. He shares his memories of being conscripted into the army and how he turned his artistic hand to create cartoons of life on the frontline (p. 58).



### DR BERNARD WILKIN

The Battle of Eylau (1807) was among Napoleon's bloodier victories. Facing off against a coalition of Prussians and Russians the emperor's forces were pushed to their limits – on page 38 Bernard provides a thrilling blow-by-blow account.



### ANDREW ROY SAUNDERS

In his upcoming new book *Lone Wolf* Andy tells the little-known story of Richard Playne Stevens – the RAF's night fighter ace. Starting on page 46 he describes how this talented pilot defended the skies while Britain slept.





# THE **TIGERS** OF **BASTOGNE**

**26** Martin King reveals how the 10th Armored Division helped win the hard-fought siege

## Frontline

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In 1968 US and South Vietnamese forces faced devastating surprise attacks from the Viet Cong

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During the Viet Cong offensive, the US government building came under direct attack

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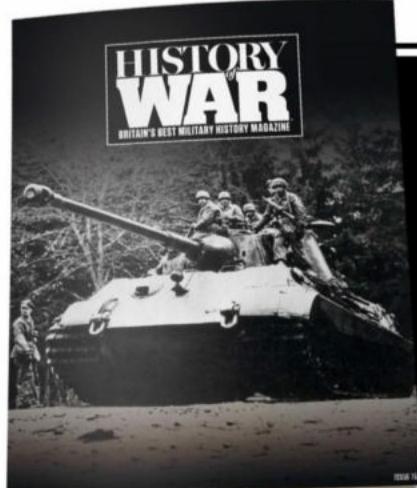
Though US forces repelled the attacks, they succeeded in bolstering opposition to the war

### **22 Q&A: Captain Flint Whitlock**

This veteran reveals how he landed in Vietnam right at the launch of the Tet Offensive

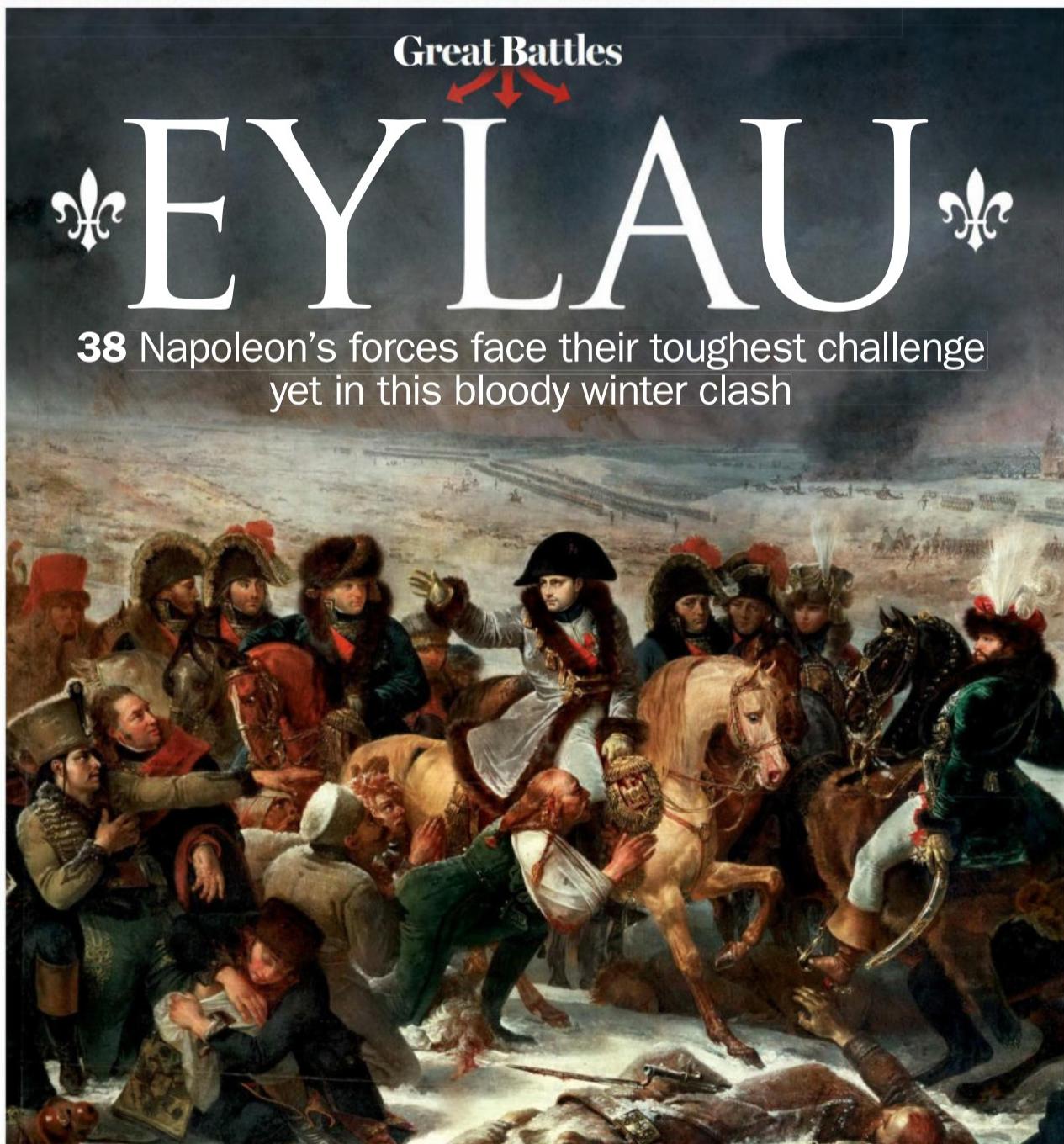
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Politicians and generals on both sides were vital to the developments on the ground

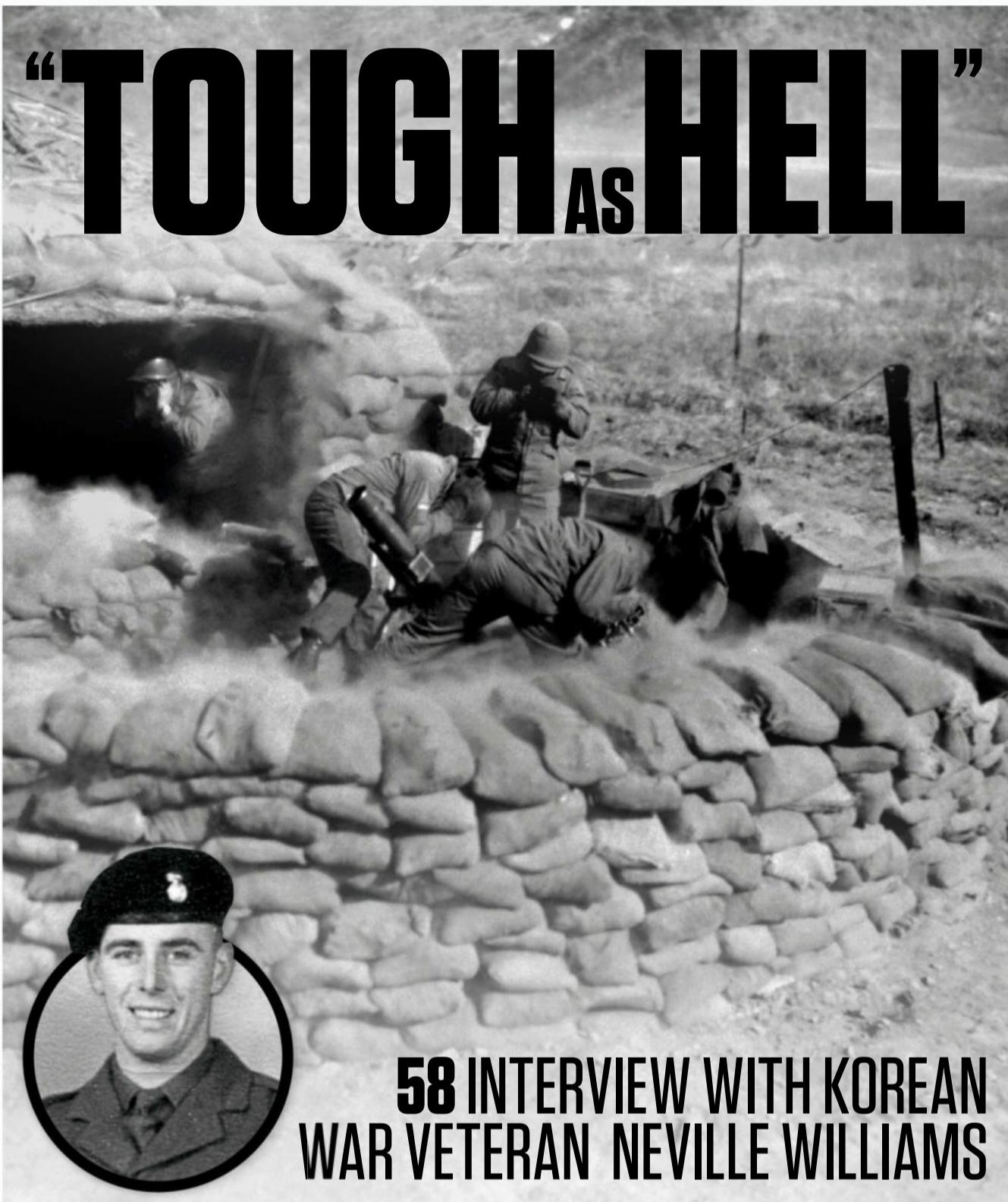


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# "TOUGH AS HELL"



**58 INTERVIEW WITH KOREAN WAR VETERAN NEVILLE WILLIAMS**



Operator's Handbook

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Armour from a Mesopotamian warrior





# WAR in FOCUS

## GUSTAF BLAST

Taken: February 2013

A US special forces soldier fires a Carl-Gustaf recoilless rifle on a firing range in Helmand province, Afghanistan. The original weapon was developed in Sweden shortly after WWII and was subsequently adopted by militaries around the world – favoured over other designs for its accuracy and ease of use. Today the M4 (CGM4) is widely used around the world.





# WAR in FOCUS

## FESTIVE FRITZ

Taken: December 1915

German troops bring a little festive decoration to their trench on the Eastern Front, in preparation for Christmas. As on the Western Front the war in the east was expected to be over by Christmas,

1914. Instead, by 1915, this front had witnessed over a million casualties in the first year of fighting. However fighting did not become as static as the trench warfare in the west.

## THE DAGUET DIVISION DEPARTS

Taken: 12 March 1991

Troops and tanks of the French light-armoured Spahi regiment stand in formation during a departure ceremony. French forces contributed to the 1991 Gulf War under the name Opération Daguet, for which a new division was formed, made up of over 10,000 troops.





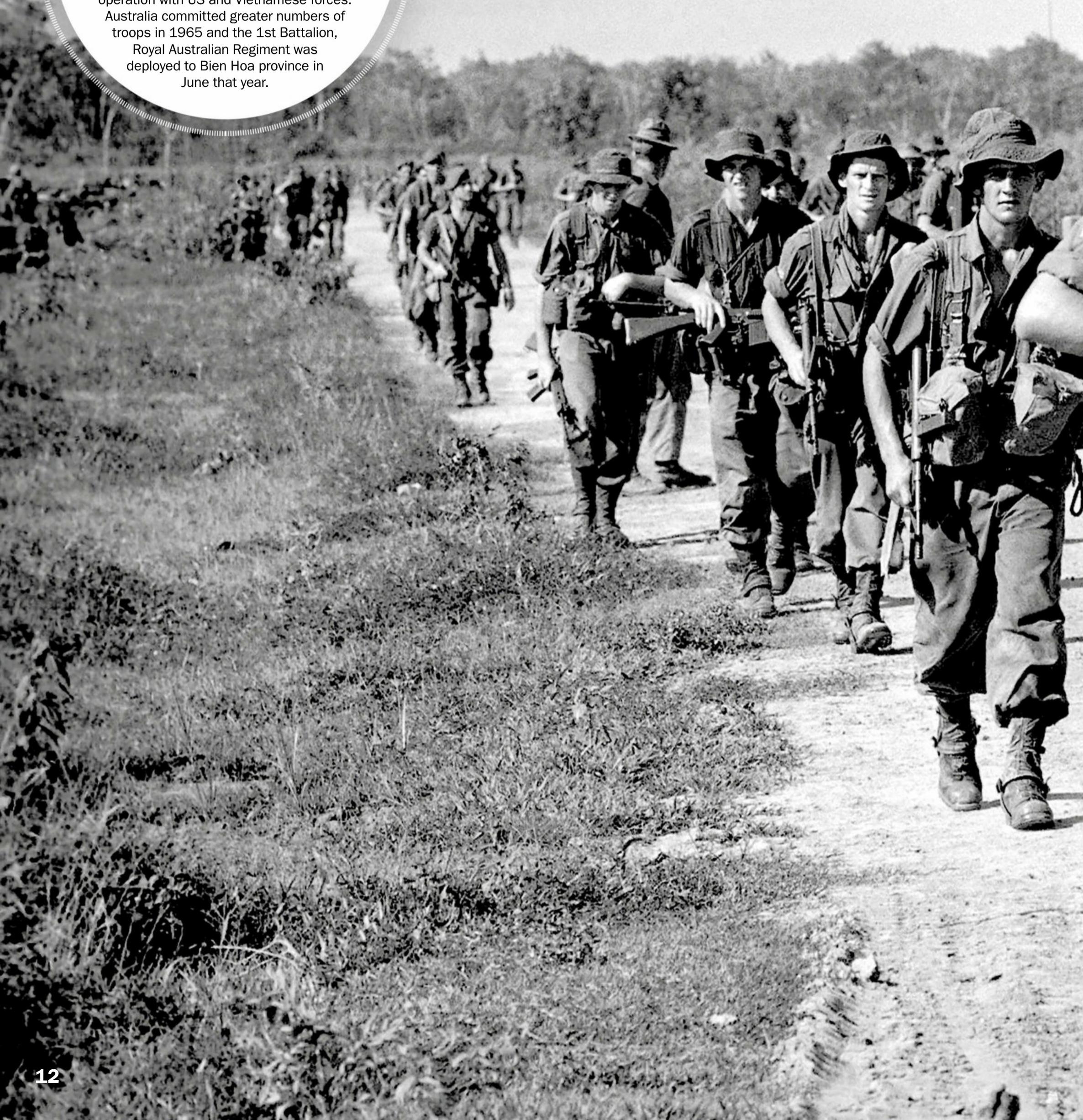
# WAR in FOCUS

## BACK TO BASE

Taken: 1 July 1965

Australian troops make their way back to Bien Hoa Airbase north of Saigon in South Vietnam after taking part in a combined 'search and destroy' operation with US and Vietnamese forces.

Australia committed greater numbers of troops in 1965 and the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment was deployed to Bien Hoa province in June that year.





TIMELINE OF THE...

# TET OFFENSIVE

North Vietnamese forces unleash a huge and unexpected attack against South Vietnam and its US-led allies in an assault that will ultimately determine the course of the Vietnam War

A female Viet Cong fighter is pictured in action with an anti-tank gun during the first phase of the offensive

## TET OFFENSIVE: PHASE I

The first, longest and most memorable period of the offensive involves over 100 attacks into South Vietnam by the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and Viet Cong (VC). Despite the shock to US-led allied forces, the North Vietnamese are too thinly spread and they incur heavy losses.

January 1968

21 January-9 July 1968

30 January-28 March 1968

30 January-3 March 1968

## GIÁP'S OFFENSIVE IDEA

With the conflict caught in a stalemate, North Vietnamese commander Võ Nguyên Giáp chooses 31 January 1968 as the occasion to launch a coordinated, surprise offensive. The plan is to attack over 100 cities and outposts in South Vietnam. The intention is to cause the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to collapse and encourage rebellion among the South Vietnamese people. If possible, the offensive might also convince American leaders to stop defending South Vietnam.

Võ Nguyên Giáp visits North Vietnamese troops during the Tet Offensive. Before the first phase, these soldiers are encouraged to, "Crack the sky, shake the Earth"

## BATTLE OF KHE SANH

North Vietnamese forces bombard a US Marines garrison at Khe Sanh on the main road from northern South Vietnam to Laos. While American resources are diverted to the defence, 70,000 North Vietnamese soldiers assemble to begin their true objective, which is the offensive.

Lance Corporal James Jones winces as North Vietnamese mortar rounds fly overhead at Khe Sanh. The slogan on his helmet reads, "I'm not a tourist, I live here"



## BATTLE OF HUĒ

PAVN-VC forces occupy Huē and largely ensconce themselves in the city's citadel. They are gradually driven out by South Vietnamese and American forces in savage urban fighting conditions. Communist forces' losses range between 2,400-8,000 killed while the Americans and South Vietnamese lose almost 700.





# ATTACK ON US EMBASSY

Nineteen Viet Cong sappers infiltrate the US Embassy complex in Saigon by blowing a hole in the perimeter wall. The ensuing battle results in the death of all but one of the attackers as well as five American soldiers. The attack has a profound psychological and political impact back in the United States.



A view of American soldiers through a hole created by the Viet Cong in the perimeter wall of the US Embassy

# ATTACK ON TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE 04

Tan Son Nhut is the headquarters of the South Vietnam Air Force and an American Military Assistance Command centre. It is used for extensive air operations, which is why it is targeted and attacked by North Vietnamese forces. This attack is repulsed with the North Vietnamese losing at least 700 killed.

*A C-47 Skytrain aircraft destroyed during the mortar and rocket attack on Tan Son Nhut Air Base*



© Getty

**30 January-28 February 1968**

# HUÊ MASSACRE

During the PAVN-VC occupation of Huê summary executions and mass killings are perpetrated while the battle rages for control of the city. The victims are purported to be those who are friendly to American forces but their numbers include people of all ages, including women and children. The death toll from the discovery of mass graves is estimated at between 2,800-6,000 civilians and prisoners of war.

*A later internment of victims from the Huê Massacre. It is estimated that between five to ten per cent of the city's population are killed during this mass slaughter*



© Alamy

31 January 1968

**31 January 1968**

# MAJOR ENGAGEMENTS

"ALTHOUGH US, SOUTH VIETNAMESE AND OTHER ALLIED COUNTRIES WIN A TACTICAL VICTORY, THEIR CONFIDENCE IN WINNING THE WAR IS SHAKEN"

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- 02 BATTLE OF HUÉ
- 07 OPERATION ALLEN BROOK
- 08 BATTLE OF KHAM DUC

- 06 BATTLE OF DAI DO
- 05 ATTACKS ON BIEN HOA AND LONG BINH
- 03 ATTACK ON US EMBASSY
- 04 ATTACK ON TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE

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## ATTACKS ON BIEN HOA AND LONG BINH 05

Bien Hoa Air Base and Long Binh Post, which is a US Army base, are simultaneously attacked. The combined locations are the largest American-South Vietnamese military centres in South Vietnam. North Vietnamese forces attack with rockets, mortars and bombs. Their efforts end in failure at the cost of 527 dead.

31 January-2 February 1968

5 May-15 June 1968

## TET OFFENSIVE: PHASE II

Also known as the 'May Offensive', Phase II is conducted in two waves against targets in South Vietnam. The main focus is an assault against Saigon while other towns and cities are harassed by bombardments. PAVN-VC losses are considerable with over 24,000 killed and 2,000 captured. Meanwhile the Americans and South Vietnamese each lose approximately 2,000 soldiers.



ARVN Rangers defend Saigon during the Tet Offensive

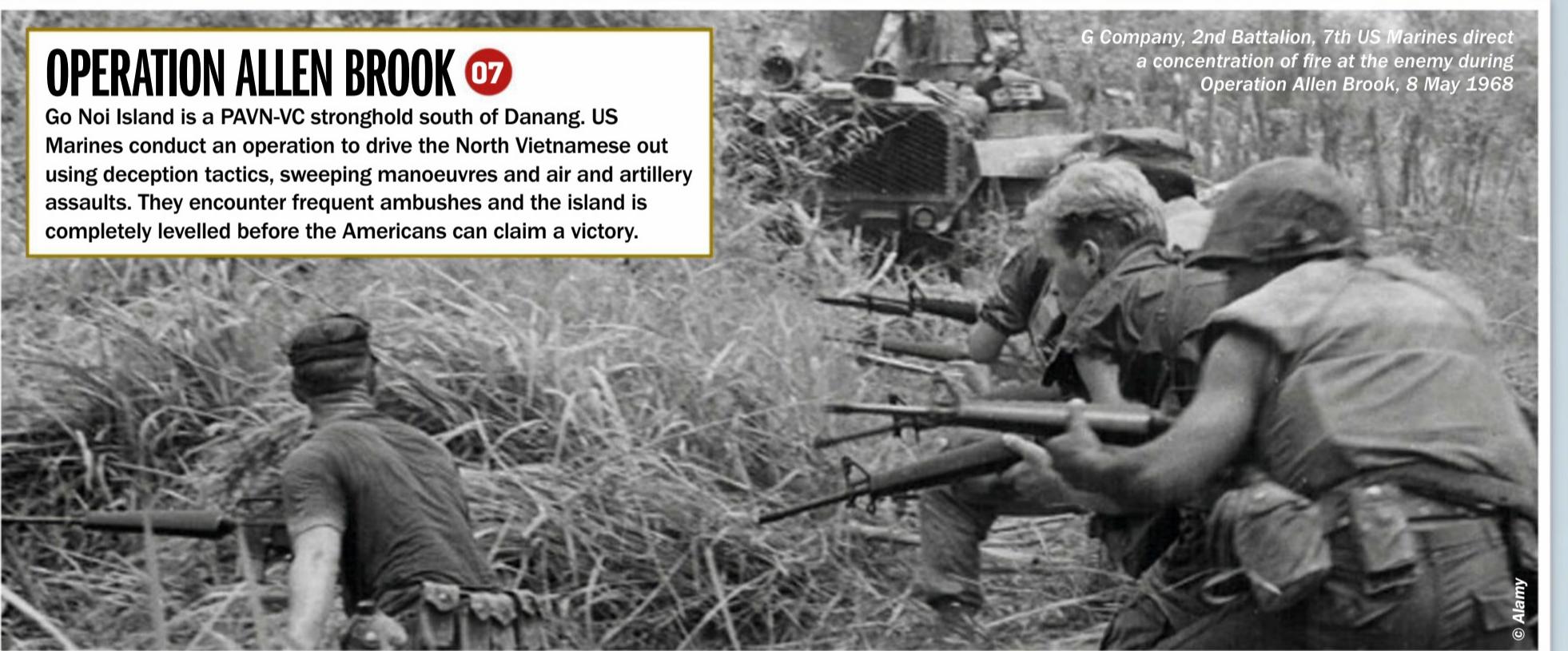
Source: Wiki/ USAF

Source: Wiki/US Department of Defense

## AFTERMATH

Although US, South Vietnamese and other allied countries win a tactical victory, their confidence in winning the war is shaken. General William Westmoreland requests 200,000 more troops but that is interpreted by the American public as an act of desperation. Anti-war protests increase and some of President Lyndon Johnson's advisors suggest a de-escalation of American involvement. The Tet Offensive is therefore a strategic North Vietnamese success.

*Anti-war demonstrators gather around the Logan Monument in Grant Park, Chicago, 26 August 1968*



## OPERATION ALLEN BROOK 07

Go Noi Island is a PAVN-VC stronghold south of Danang. US Marines conduct an operation to drive the North Vietnamese out using deception tactics, sweeping manoeuvres and air and artillery assaults. They encounter frequent ambushes and the island is completely levelled before the Americans can claim a victory.

G Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th US Marines direct a concentration of fire at the enemy during Operation Allen Brook, 8 May 1968

30 April-3 May 1968

4 May-24 August 1968

10-12 May 1968

9 August-23 September 1968

1968

## BATTLE OF DAI DO 06

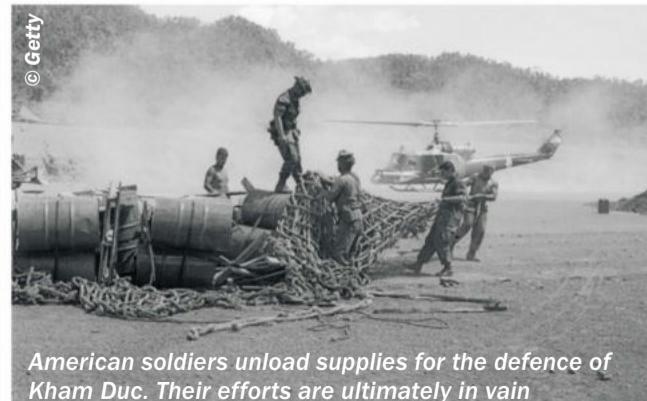
PAVN battalions attack a vital supply line along the Cua Viet River with hand-to-hand, house-to-house fighting taking place in the hamlet of Dai Do. The Americans and South Vietnamese win the battle and prevent the PAVN from attacking Dong Ha Combat Base.



*Battle weary Marines of Lim company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, rest in a muddy field during a lull in the action against the Viet Cong which has gone on for five days*

## BATTLE OF KHAM DUC 08

Outnumbered American, South Vietnamese and Australian troops prepare defences at an airstrip when North Vietnamese forces attack. Despite airborne reinforcements, Kham Duc needs to be evacuated, which results in a PAVN-VC victory.



*American soldiers unload supplies for the defence of Kham Duc. Their efforts are ultimately in vain*

## TET OFFENSIVE: PHASE III

North Vietnamese forces specifically attack military targets with less concise assaults against towns and cities. Saigon is again attacked but the North Vietnamese suffer heavy casualties and there are no decisive results.

*American troopers of 37th Infantry, 101st Air Cavalry Division patrol the Laotian border during Operation Plain, 14 August 1968*



# BATTLE AT THE EMBASSY

Communist insurgents infiltrated the grounds of the US embassy in Saigon and fought a pitched battle to the death

The peace and goodwill of Tet, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year celebration, were shattered on 30 January 1968 when Communist forces launched their surprise offensive in 13 cities across South Vietnam. Sudden and ferocious, the onslaught spread rapidly to engulf more than 100 towns and hamlets throughout the embattled country.

Nowhere was the shock of the Tet Offensive more keenly felt, or the reach of the communist regime in North Vietnam more powerfully demonstrated, than in the compound of the US embassy itself, situated in Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam. While preliminary reports of attacks from both the Viet Cong and regular units of the North Vietnamese Army flooded into the US embassy, the Tet Offensive came home in shocking fashion, early in the morning of 31 January.

Before dawn two vehicles carrying 19 Viet Cong guerrillas departed their safe house at a Saigon auto repair shop and sped toward the embassy. The small truck and taxi stopped in

the street beside the compound. After a car bomb detonated in March 1965, destroying the earlier building and killing 22 people, the US embassy had been relocated from its original site to a tract of just more than three acres near the British and French embassies and not far from the Presidential Palace. Construction of the new main embassy building, the six-story chancery, had been completed only four months previously.

Members of the elite Viet Cong C-10 Sapper Battalion had trained extensively for their mission to breach the walls of the embassy compound, force their way into the chancery and take hostages. Their commander at Viet Cong Sub-Region 6 headquarters informed them that a large group of anti-government students would converge on the embassy that morning and that the guerrillas could expect relief as larger Viet Cong units reached the scene later in the day. The insurgents swiftly exited their vehicles. They set explosives and at 2.47am blew a hole, just large enough for a man to

crawl through, in the 2.4-metre high, 154mm thick concrete and marble compound wall.

"I was asleep in room 433, the duty officer's quarters, when the building was shaken by a loud explosion just before 3.00am," E. Allan Wendt, a Foreign Service officer at the embassy, wrote later for the *Wall Street Journal*. "I rolled out of bed and reached for the telephone. Automatic weapons fire broke out. I called Mr Calhoun [Political Officer John A. Calhoun] at his home and told him the embassy was under attack. As I was speaking, another explosion tore into the building."

The initial blast alerted two American guards, US Army Specialist Charles Daniel and Private First Class William Sebast, on duty at the night gate, and they were immediately taken under fire as they raised the alarm. Daniel quickly radioed for help, "They're coming in! They're coming in!" The two leaders of the guerrilla team, Bay Tuyen and Ut Nho, were first through the hole, and the guards shot both of them dead. Moments later, however, two Vietnamese men, employed by



Viet Cong guerrillas blasted a small hole in the wall to enter the US embassy compound



The body of a dead Viet Cong sapper lies in the courtyard of the US embassy

the US State Department as drivers but who were actually Viet Cong insurgents, gunned both Americans down from behind.

Running from the rear of the compound in response to the radio call, Marine Sergeant Ronald Harper reached the front of the chancery and closed the heavy teakwood doors just in time. The Viet Cong fired B-40 rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons at the doors but failed to gain entry.

Still, chaos reigned. At the time of the attack, only three US Marines, six American civilians and two Vietnamese embassy employees were inside the chancery.

Responding to the alert a pair of US Army MPs (military police), Sergeant Johnnie Thomas and Specialist Owen Mebust, drove their Jeep toward the scene only to come under heavy fire from the Viet Cong near the main gate. Both MPs were killed. From the roof of the chancery, Marine Sergeant Rudy Soto Jr, noticed the commotion in the courtyard and fired several rounds from his 12-gauge shotgun. When that weapon jammed, he emptied his .38-calibre revolver at a distance too great to be effective.

Marine Corporal James Marshall climbed to the roof of an outbuilding and fired at the insurgents. He was wounded by shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade and killed by enemy fire moments later.

Confused and leaderless the remaining insurgents took shelter behind six large concrete planters in the embassy courtyard. They carried but failed to utilise more than 40 pounds of C-4 plastic explosive that might have blown open the heavy doors of the chancery, although rocket-propelled grenades inflicted

## **"FIVE AMERICANS HAD BEEN KILLED AND A SINGLE INSURGENT WAS CAPTURED. THE 18 BLOOD-SPATTERED BODIES OF HIS COMRADES WERE STREWN ABOUT THE COURTYARD"**

serious damage to the walls of the building, penetrating in several places, destroying a pair of radio locations at the guard post and wounding another Marine.

At 4.20am General William Westmoreland, commander of US forces in Vietnam, ordered the 716th MP Battalion to secure the embassy. Similar orders were also issued to the 101st Airborne Division, elements of which were already fighting the Viet Cong around the army base at Bien Hoa east of Saigon.

At approximately 5.00am a helicopter flew low over the chancery. Carrying paratroopers of the 101st the pilot attempted to land on the helipad on the building's roof, but intense Viet Cong fire made it too hazardous for the moment. Detachments of US Marines and MPs rushed through the front gate and into the rear parking lot. Several of the insurgents were already dead or wounded, and those who continued to resist were swiftly killed. The body of the last insurgent was discovered curled inside one of the large planters.

"Well after daybreak, trips to the roof revealed several orbiting helicopters, though none with any discernible intention of landing," Wendt recalled. "We waited, always wondering why there was still no landing. About 8.15am, I headed back up to the roof ... As I stepped off the elevator on the sixth floor, I was greeted by a strange sight. Standing before me were five paratroopers in full battle dress from the 101st airborne division. They carried M-16s, M-79 grenade launchers, hand grenades, and knives. I asked for the platoon commander. Maj. [Hillel] Schwartz stepped forward, and I told him I was the duty officer. He offered me a hand grenade, which I declined. He said 30 more men would land soon."

Six hours after the ordeal had begun, the embassy grounds were secured. Five Americans had been killed and a single insurgent was captured. The 18 blood-spattered bodies of his comrades were strewn about the courtyard. At around 9.00am General Westmoreland arrived at the embassy compound to assess the situation. In an effort to reassure the civilian population and convey that the situation was under control, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker ordered the embassy be open for business later in the day.

The Viet Cong attack on the US embassy had failed to penetrate the chancery itself. However it demonstrated that the insurgency was dedicated and active, even in the heart of the South Vietnamese capital. The fact that the Viet Cong could attack such a prominent symbol of US power and presence in Southeast Asia was simply shocking. Images of the encounter were flashed around the world and its impact on the course of the protracted Vietnam War cannot be underestimated.



*Damage from Viet Cong fire scars the chancery building inside the US embassy compound*



Frontline

# A STRATEGIC VICTORY?

Although Communist forces were defeated in battle across South Vietnam, the offensive succeeded in galvanising American public opinion against the protracted war in Southeast Asia

**W**hen North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap conceived the master plan for the Tet Offensive he did so with clear objectives. Giap hoped to spark a general uprising against the corrupt South Vietnamese government of President Nguyen Van Thieu, destabilising the political situation within South Vietnam. He wanted to convince the American people that the Vietnam War, already a protracted and costly endeavour by early 1968, was nowhere near conclusion.

He also sought to demonstrate that Communist forces could strike at the time and place of their choosing, dictating to the South Vietnamese and their American sponsors that the Vietnam War would continue to take a heavy toll in lives and resources.

Giap was keenly aware that the support of the American people for the war effort had begun to wane. Despite the lengthening casualty rolls and the deployment of nearly 500,000 American personnel to Vietnam, as recently as the autumn of 1967, reports from the US military establishment and the government in Washington, DC, had proclaimed that there was "light at the end of the tunnel".

The war in Vietnam, they said, was nearing a victorious end.

The stark, sudden impact of the Tet Offensive changed the dynamic profoundly. Television footage of the violence flashed across the screens in American living rooms. Horrific images of the dead and wounded, blazing buildings and chaos in South Vietnam interrupted dinner conversations. The bloody bodies of insurgents killed as they breached the walls and entered the American embassy compound in Saigon, the South Vietnamese capital, were photographed where they fell, the images reproduced on the front pages of newspapers across the US.

Atrocities were committed on both sides. When the Viet Cong entered the provincial capital of Hue, they rounded up thousands of citizens suspected of sympathising with the South Vietnamese and Americans. Civic leaders were summarily shot and 2,800 bodies were later discovered in a mass grave. At least 3,000 other people simply disappeared. In the heart of Saigon, Nguyen Loc Loan, chief of the country's national police, was captured on film pointing his revolver at the head of a handcuffed Viet Cong prisoner and executing the man in the street.

Americans recoiled from these appalling images and a wave of mistrust in the government's message energised the smouldering anti-war movement in the United States.

Even moderates were moved after CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite, known as the most trusted man in America, pronounced soberly, "We've been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders ... both in Vietnam and Washington to have faith any longer

in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds. For it seems now more certain than ever, that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate. To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past ... To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, if unsatisfactory conclusion. But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as honourable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could."

Meanwhile the Communist forces that launched such a violent and initially promising offensive across South Vietnam suffered mightily at the hands of an opposing military force that shook off the initial shock to inflict 175,000 casualties against the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. For Giap the military defeat was a staggering blow. Nevertheless his forces had been tenacious in their effort, holding out for days during bitter fighting in Hue and the lengthy but unsuccessful siege of the American base at Khe Sanh.

In the aftermath of the Tet Offensive the reality of the battlefield faded while the movement to end American military involvement in Vietnam gripped the nation. Historians continue to grapple with the implications of Tet and the Vietnam experience. Some contend that the war was lost in American living rooms, the military effort undermined by the media. Others assert that the conflict was inevitably "unwinnable" regardless of the tally of so-called "battlefield victories". The vigorous debate continues.

Without question, however, the repercussions of Tet were keenly felt in the US anti-war demonstrations intensified in the streets of American cities. President Lyndon B. Johnson refused the request of General William Westmoreland, commander of US forces in Vietnam, for another 200,000 troops, and Westmoreland was subsequently replaced. Johnson further restricted the areas of North Vietnam that would be subject to American bombing and suggested peace negotiations.

Johnson's presidency may, in fact, also be considered a casualty of Tet. On 31 March 1968 he addressed the nation solemnly declaring, "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president."

The Tet Offensive was indeed the turning point of the Vietnam War. Johnson's successor, President Richard Nixon, then pursued policies of "Vietnamization" and "Peace with Honour".

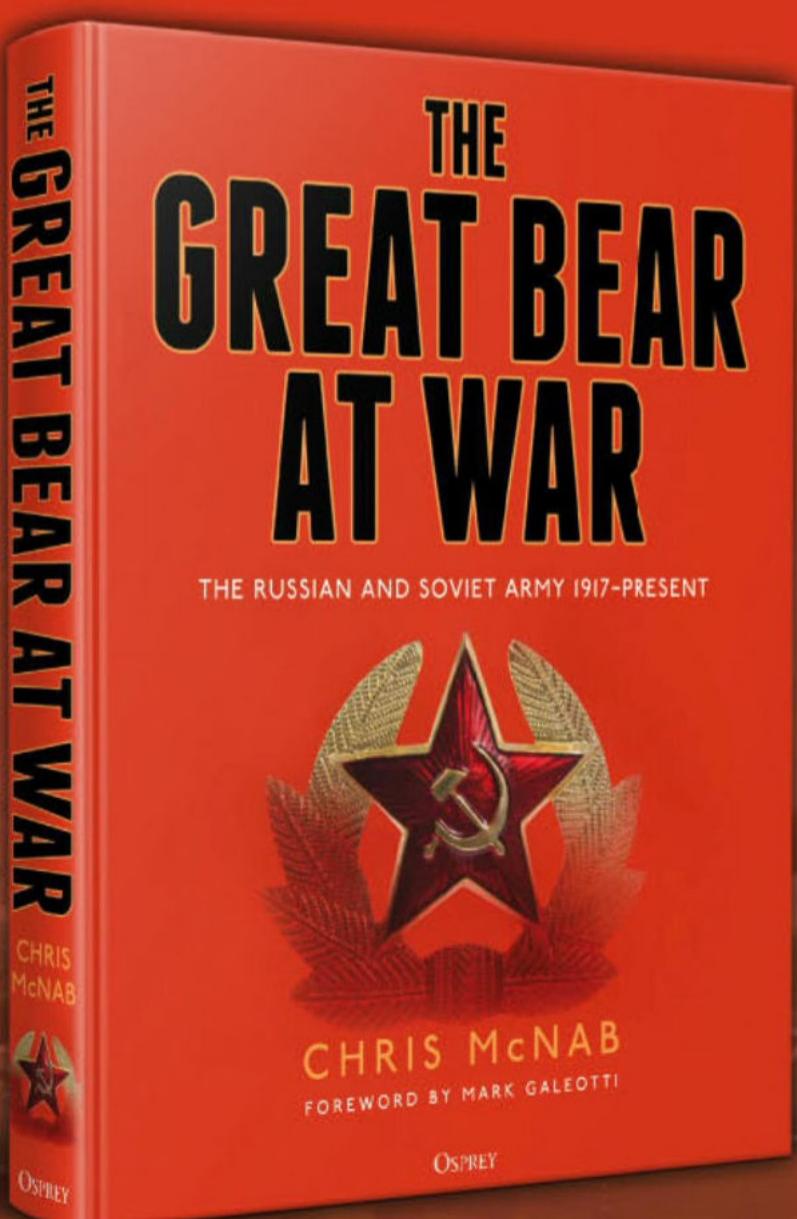
Image: Getty



Broadcast journalist  
Walter Cronkite raised  
the probability of an  
unwinnable war in  
Vietnam during an  
evening newscast

# THE GREAT BEAR AT WAR

THE RUSSIAN AND SOVIET ARMY 1917-PRESENT



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Frontline

# A TET WELCOME TO VIETNAM

The opening gunfire of the Tet Offensive greeted Captain Flint Whitlock on arrival in South Vietnam

*Below:* Captain Flint Whitlock experienced the opening hours of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam



*Inset, left:* Captain Flint Whitlock completed a 12-month tour of duty in Vietnam and remembers the Tet Offensive



**T**wenty-five-year-old Captain Flint Whitlock of suburban Chicago, Illinois, graduated from the University of Illinois in 1964 with an officer's commission in the US Army. After training on the Nike Hercules anti-aircraft missile system and completing parachute training at Fort Benning, Georgia, he was stationed in West Germany. Soon afterward he transferred to the Quartermaster Corps and received orders for Vietnam. Arriving at the replacement depot at Bien Hoa airbase, 20 miles northeast of Saigon, on 29 January 1968, Captain Whitlock experienced the opening hours of the Tet Offensive.

After discharge from the army in 1970, Whitlock pursued a long and critically acclaimed career as an author and lecturer. He has written numerous books and articles on varied historical topics and resides today in Denver, Colorado. Memories of his Vietnam experience are recounted in his novel *Internal Conflicts*, which was the winner of the 2010 Gold Medal for literary fiction from the Military Writers Society of America.

#### **Could you describe your arrival in Vietnam?**

We had been delayed for a day at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines because of a problem with our aircraft, and that delay probably saved my life. I had originally been assigned to report to the Nha Trang Support Command in Nha Trang, Republic of Vietnam, with a probable reassignment to a unit 'in the field'. However due to the Tet attacks my assignment, and everyone else's at the replacement depot at that time, was changed after the attacks died down and 'normalcy' returned. I would be assigned to 1st Logistical Command Headquarters at Long Binh, adjacent to the Bien Hoa airbase.

#### **What happened on the morning of 30 January?**

The other replacements and I were assigned quarters at the depot, small wooden barracks called 'hootches'. Very early on the morning of 30 January, while trying to sleep in the hot, humid hootch, we were suddenly awakened by loud, very close explosions and gunfire.

Everyone in the hootch hit the floor and covered ourselves with mattresses, duffle bags, and whatever else we could find. We had no weapons, so we just lay there while 's\*\*\*' flew through the air.

#### **Did the situation change as the day wore on?**

Our hootch was not far from the perimeter wire fence, where machine-gunners in the guard tower there were firing into the black night. We later learned that there was a Vietnamese cemetery nearby and the Viet Cong had attacked from that position. As the day grew light a Huey gunship flew low over our compound and fired rockets into the cemetery – the scariest sound I have ever heard.

As the morning wore on and the firing died down, we were allowed to leave our hootches and head for the latrine. While I was taking my turn and crossing the compound, there was a sudden blast off in the distance, and a huge dirty-gray mushroom cloud began blossoming into the sky. Everyone around threw ourselves onto the ground, thinking that this was a

## **"TET WAS THE TURNING POINT IN THE WAR BECAUSE AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION WAS LED TO BELIEVE THAT THE ENEMY HAD SCORED A GREAT VICTORY, WHEN IN FACT THE OPPOSITE WAS TRUE, AT LEAST IN MY OPINION"**

nuclear explosion. I learned later that Viet Cong sappers had broken into the Long Binh artillery ammunition dump and blown up a pallet of eight-inch shells. The rest of the day was tense, but there was no other action where I was.

*Captain Flint Whitlock leans against his Jeep during a quiet day at his base in Long Binh*



#### **What did you experience beyond 30 January as the Tet Offensive continued?**

The next few days were and are a blur. At some point I got assigned to regular BOQ (Base Officer Quarters), very primitive, at Long Binh and was assigned to the Plans and Projects Office at the Directorate of Supply at 1st Logistics Headquarters. This was a very plush assignment. We had modern, air-conditioned offices, flushing toilets and a fine officer's club. But for the next couple weeks the Viet Cong would periodically send shells, rockets, and mortars into the post, seldom hitting anything important because the place was so huge.

#### **What other significant memories of Tet do you recall?**

Naturally we all followed the progress of the fighting. We would get situation reports delivered to our office every day telling about what was going on in various parts of the country. It was clear from these 'sit reps' that we had absorbed the VC and NVA blows and were 'kicking butt' up and down the country; only in Hue and the Cholon district of Saigon did the enemy hold out for very long before they were destroyed. I was feeling good about how the US had responded and how we had won a significant victory.

#### **The perspective on Tet seems to have been different elsewhere – why?**

A few weeks after Tet I went to a briefing at headquarters where they showed a compilation of televised news reports from the US and came away shocked – the news media had portrayed our victory as a defeat! I, and everyone else, could not believe how the media had distorted what we knew to be the reality. During World War II did the media portray the Battle of the Bulge as a German victory? Did we surrender after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor? No, of course not. Seeing how Tet and our victory were turned into a defeat by the media was a heavy psychological blow.

#### **How did the situation change for soldiers like yourself after Tet, and how would you assess the significance of the offensive?**

I'm not sure the situation did change for me. We continued to do our jobs but were aware of the growing opposition to the war back in the US. It was all very puzzling for me, as we had been told that we were there to stop the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia. I feel the people back home let us down. I guess you could say Tet was the turning point in the war because American public opinion was led to believe that the enemy had scored a great victory when in fact the opposite was true, at least in my opinion.

#### **How did you spend the rest of your 12-month tour of duty in Vietnam?**

I was lucky. I never had to go out into the 'boonies'. The war came to us in the form of periodic mortar and rocket attacks. I was never in any real danger. I did hear a rumour that after I had rotated back to the States my BOQ was destroyed by a rocket or mortar but don't know if that is true. By the way, my daughter was born while I was in Vietnam. We did not know my wife was pregnant at the time I left for overseas.

# GENERALS, GUERRILLAS AND THE COMMUNIST BONAPARTE

North Vietnamese forces were commanded by highly skilled generals who were opposed by commanders of varying quality from the United States and South Vietnam

## VŨ NGUYỄN GIÁP

THE 'RED NAPOLEON'  
1911-2013 NORTH VIETNAM

Politically minded from an early age Giáp worked as a history teacher and journalist before he joined the Communist Party. He began protesting against French rule in Indochina and joined with Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Viet Minh, to organise guerrilla activities against the Japanese during WWII.

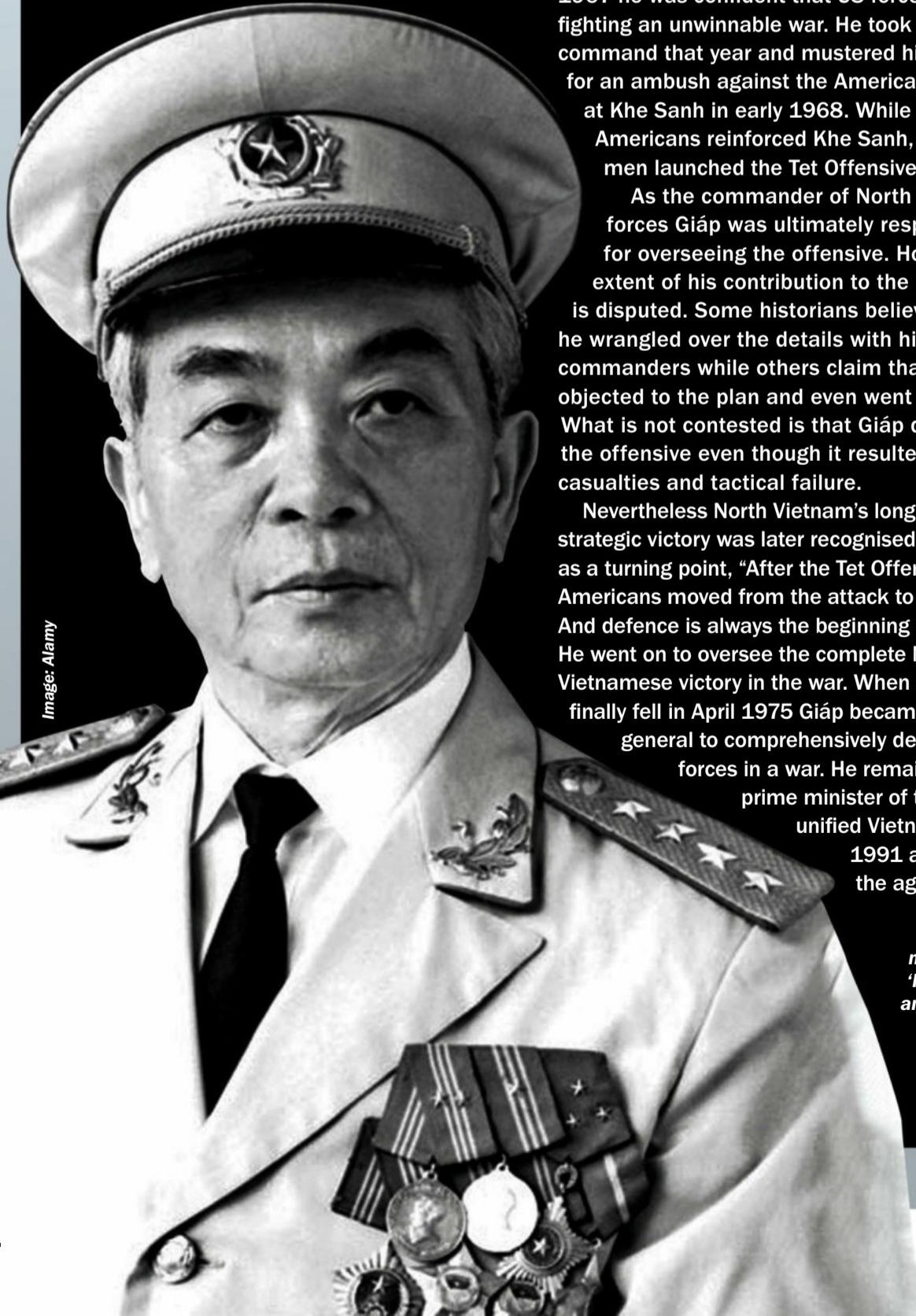


Image: Alamy

Giáp cut his military teeth during the First Indochina War when he commanded Viet Minh forces against the French. He was the victor of the decisive Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, which led to the partition of Vietnam. As deputy prime minister and minister of defence of what was then North Vietnam, Giáp was also the overall commander of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN).

Over the next decade he sent increasing amounts of troops to South Vietnam to fight growing American involvement. As early as 1967 he was confident that US forces were fighting an unwinnable war. He took direct command that year and mustered his forces for an ambush against the American fortress at Khe Sanh in early 1968. While the Americans reinforced Khe Sanh, Giáp's men launched the Tet Offensive.

As the commander of North Vietnamese forces Giáp was ultimately responsible for overseeing the offensive. However the extent of his contribution to the planning is disputed. Some historians believe that he wrangled over the details with his senior commanders while others claim that he objected to the plan and even went abroad. What is not contested is that Giáp did not stop the offensive even though it resulted in heavy casualties and tactical failure.

Nevertheless North Vietnam's long term strategic victory was later recognised by Giáp as a turning point, "After the Tet Offensive, the Americans moved from the attack to the defence. And defence is always the beginning of defeat." He went on to oversee the complete North Vietnamese victory in the war. When Saigon finally fell in April 1975 Giáp became the first general to comprehensively defeat US forces in a war. He remained deputy prime minister of the now unified Vietnam until 1991 and lived to the age of 102.

*Giáp was nicknamed the 'Red Napoleon' and was heavily influenced by the French emperor as well as T. E. Lawrence*

## WILLIAM WESTMORELAND

THE OVERCONFIDENT AMERICAN COMMANDER OF US FORCES  
1914-2005 USA

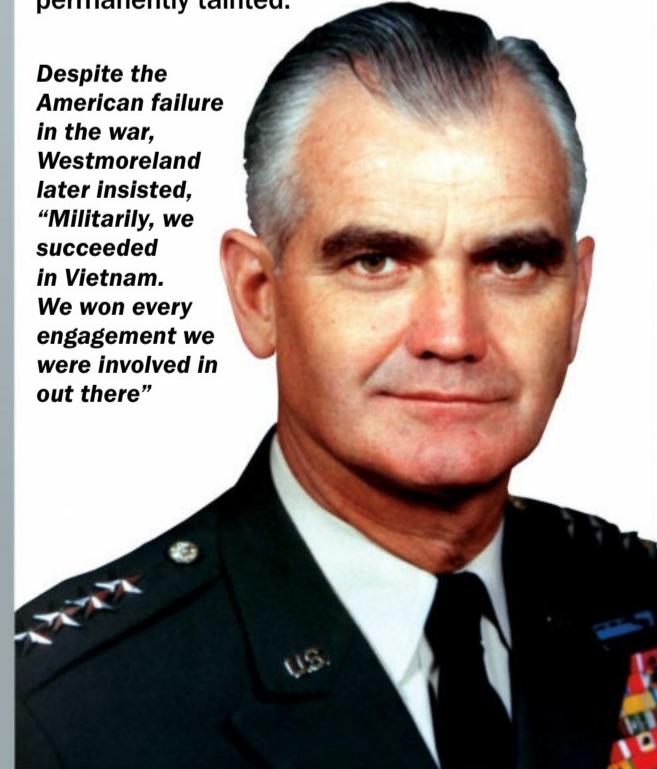
Born in South Carolina Westmoreland graduated from West Point in 1936. He fought as an artillery officer during WWII in Tunisia, Sicily, France and Germany. A brigadier general during the Korean War he subsequently commanded US forces in South Vietnam between 1964-68.

Despite his rise to high command Westmoreland's overconfidence proved his undoing. He continually underestimated the military ability of the North Vietnamese and believed wearing them down with attrition strategies would win the war. During the Tet Offensive he gave a notorious press conference in Saigon that was continually interrupted by the sound of artillery fire.

He declared to the media that the offensive was "about to run out of steam" and merely "a diversionary effort to take attention away from the northern part of the country".

In the aftermath of the offensive Westmoreland requested a further 200,000 troops to supplement the existing 550,000 American troops in Vietnam. He was ultimately recalled to Washington to act as the US Army's chief-of-staff but his reputation was permanently tainted.

*Despite the American failure in the war, Westmoreland later insisted, "Militarily, we succeeded in Vietnam. We won every engagement we were involved in out there"*



Source: Wiki/ United States Defense Visual Information Center



Image: Getty

## CAO VÂN VIÊN THE SKILLED DEFENDER OF SAIGON 1921-2008 SOUTH VIETNAM

Born in Laos to Vietnamese parents Viên was initially a follower of Ho Chi Minh and fought against French rule. He was captured and earned a degree in French Literature before joining the independent but French-affiliated Vietnamese National Army as an officer.

Extensively trained by the Americans, Viên was awarded the US Silver Star in 1964 and became South Vietnam's only four-star general.

Viên played a critical role during the Tet Offensive when he led the defence of Saigon against PAVN-VC forces. Often operating in back streets he ordered counterattacks and fought with limited personnel. He used his own staff as combat troops and personally led divisions throughout the city including an attack on an air base.

The military headquarters of South Vietnam and Saigon itself was saved but Viên later disagreed with American opinions about North Vietnamese intentions. He later criticised the American and South Vietnamese governments for not following up their tactical victory during the offensive.

**Viên was forced into exile following the fall of Saigon in 1975 and spent the rest of his life in the United States. He became an American citizen in 1982**

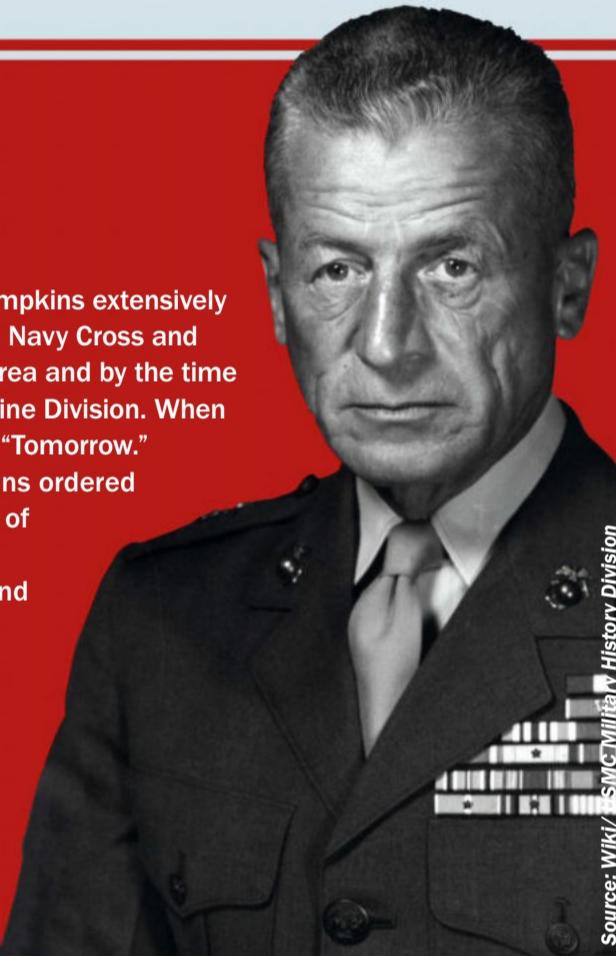
## RATHVON M. TOMPKINS THE DOGGED DEFENDER OF KHE SANH 1912-99 USA

Commissioned as a US Marines lieutenant in 1936, Tompkins extensively fought in the Pacific during WWII and was awarded the Navy Cross and Silver Star for valour. He received the Bronze Star in Korea and by the time of the Vietnam War he was the commander of 3rd Marine Division. When asked how soon he could be in the country, he replied, "Tomorrow."

Commanding 24,000 men in January 1968 Tompkins ordered the defences at Khe Sanh to be reinforced in the light of North Vietnamese attacks. This transpired to be the preliminary deception assaults for the Tet Offensive and Khe Sanh was quickly encircled.

Every attack was repelled and the base was successfully defended until the encirclement was broken in April 1968. Throughout this time Tompkins made daily inspections of frontline troops and was decorated with the Distinguished Service Medal.

*Tompkins served 36 years in the US Marines and when he retired he was awarded a second Distinguished Service Medal*



Source: Wiki/ USMC Military History Division

## FOSTER C. LAHUE THE COMMANDER OF TASK FORCE X-RAY 1917-96 USA

A native of Indiana LaHue served as a US Marines junior officer in the Pacific Theatre during WWII and was awarded the Silver Star while commanding 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines in the Korean War. Between March 1967 and April 1968 he served with 1st Marine Division while commanding Task Force X-Ray as a brigadier general.

Comprising of four Marines battalions, X-Ray was significantly involved in the Battle of Hué. When North Vietnamese forces overran the city, the task force was called upon to retake in conjunction with other American and South Vietnamese troops. LaHue's troops recaptured much of the south of Hué, which led him to believe that the city's citadel could be successfully stormed.

A brigade of 101st Airborne Division was also attached to X-Ray, which blocked a PAVN-VC retreat out of the city. American and South Vietnamese forces retook Hué on 2 March 1968 and LaHue was promoted to major general that August. He ended his career as a lieutenant general and chief-of-staff of the Marine Corps.

*During WWII LaHue fought in the both the New Georgia and Admiralty Islands campaigns as part of the elite Marine Raiders*

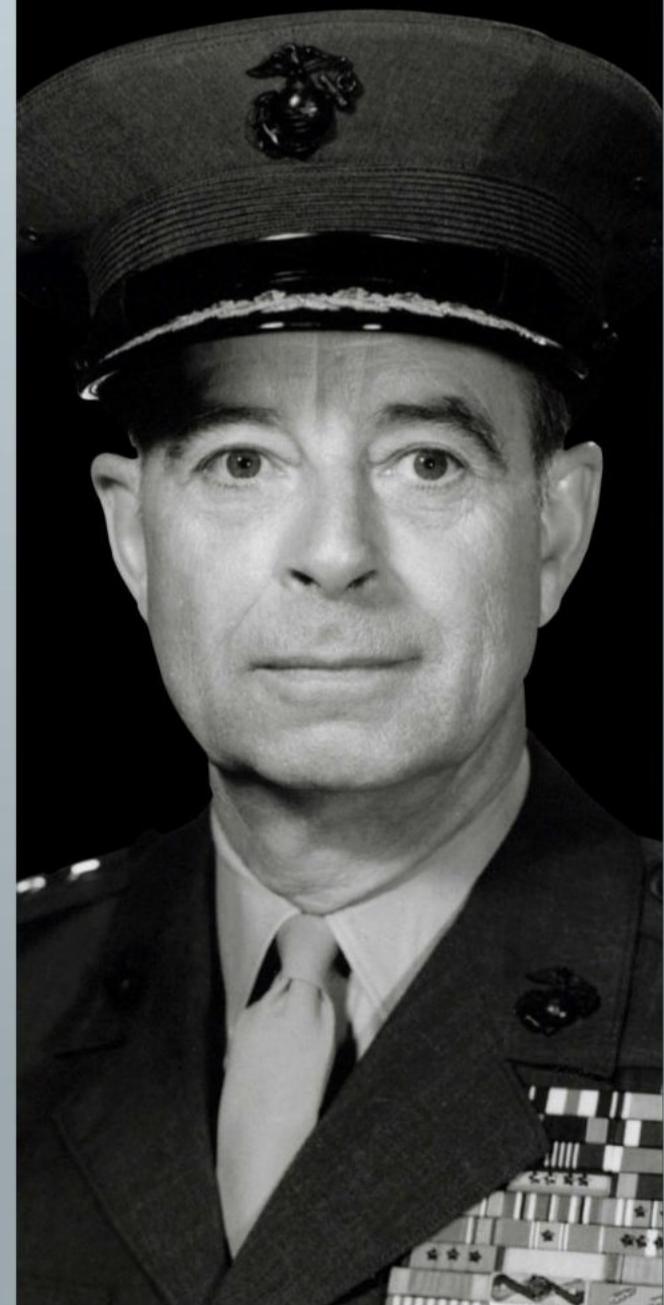


Image: Getty

## TRÀ VÂN TRÀ THE VIET CONG GUERRILLA WHO LEARNED FROM THE MISTAKES OF THE TET OFFENSIVE 1918-96 NORTH VIETNAM

Trà joined the Communist Party in 1938 and was arrested several times by the French during WWII. A Saigon-based commander in the Viet Minh, Trà used guerrilla tactics against the French during the First Indochina War. Upon the creation of North Vietnam he became a deputy chief-of-staff in the PAVN.

During the early 1960s Trà rallied and trained guerrillas in South Vietnam that became known as the Viet Cong. Despite this important role he was not given overall command over these forces with the Tet Offensive in particular being directed by political commissars from Hanoi. Nevertheless Trà's Viet Cong took were in the vanguard of the offensive and took most of the casualties. He personally led the failed attack on Saigon and he learned much from the tactical mistakes of 1968.

In 1974 Trà managed to persuade many conservative strategists in Hanoi to change their plans for the final attack on Saigon. Although he was again not in direct command Trà was a key architect of the 1975 Spring Offensive that ended the Vietnam War.

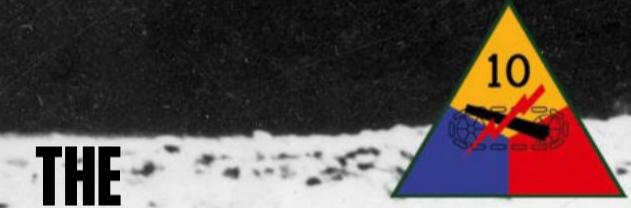
*The son of a bricklayer Trà was well regarded by his troops but later fell out with his superiors and became a pig farmer*

Source: Wiki / USMC



Image: Alamy

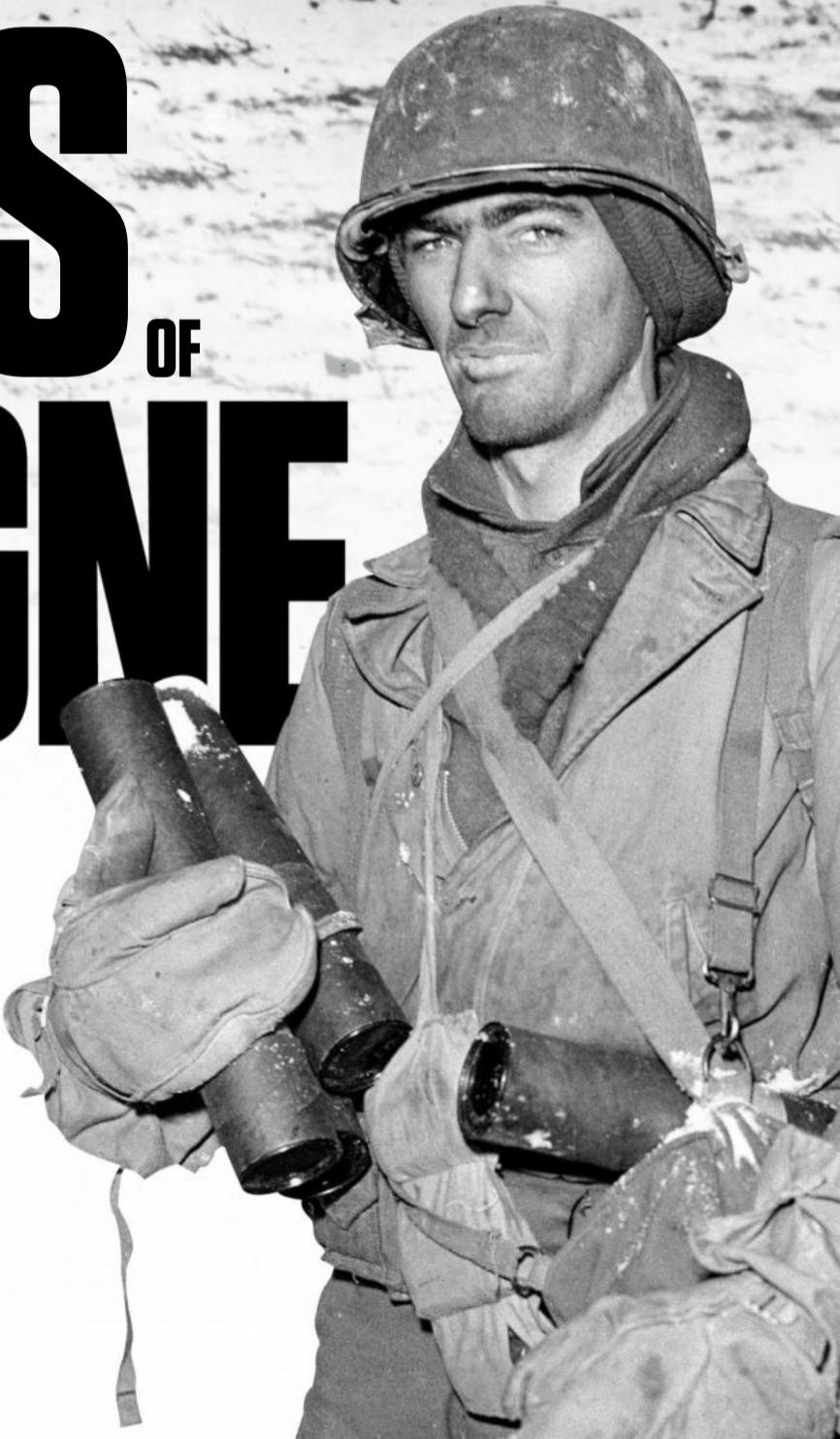
Source: Wiki/Dept. of Defense



# THE **TIGERS** OF **BASTOGNE**

WORDS MARTIN KING

Thanks to TV series such as Band Of Brothers many assume that the 101st Airborne defended Bastogne alone during the Battle of the Bulge. In fact the US 10th Armored division got there before them by eight crucial hours. Their motto was 'Terrify and Destroy' and their nickname was The Tiger Division





**O**n 16 December 1944 at 5.30am in a salient just east of the Belgian/German frontier, dispersed wide along an area known as the Schnee Eifel, green troops of the 106th Golden Lion Division were rudely awakened from their winter sojourn by spectral red, green, amber and white thunder flashes irradiating the misty predawn sky. Moments later they heard the terrifying whine of 'Screamin meemies', Nazi 'Nebelwerfers' simultaneously belching out multiple mortar shells accompanied by booming artillery that collectively gouged and fractured the frigid earth where they stood. John Schaffner, a scout with 589th Field Artillery Battalion said, "Many rounds exploded real close and showered dirt and tree limbs about, I got down as low as I could and would have crawled into my helmet if my buttons hadn't gotten in the way." Shortly after these vulnerable American troops heard the menacing throaty rumble of approaching Tiger and Panther tanks.

"I was in a chateau in Sierck, France, I was told by a runner to return to HQ,"

Image: Getty

**Opposite page, top:** A German Tiger II pictured during the Ardennes counter-offensive, which became known as the Battle of the Bulge, December 1944

**Opposite page, left:** A heavily-armed German soldier marches into Belgium

**Opposite page, right:** A tired American soldier back from the front lines near the town of Murrigen during the Battle of the Bulge

said Clair Bennett, F Company, 90th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized). "As we were moving out, we found out that the Germans were attacking Belgium."

That same day the US 12th Army Group commander General Omar Bradley began to acknowledge fragmentary reports concerning enemy activity in the Ardennes. This didn't deter him from attending his planned conference with Eisenhower at the Hôtel Trianon Palace in Versailles. The conference was attended by Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder and Generals Walter Bedell Smith, Harold R. Bull (his chief G-3, part of the American military intelligence operations) and Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence British Major General Kenneth Strong. The proceedings were suddenly interrupted when an American deputy G-2 entered the conference room and delivered a message to Strong, who promptly got to his feet and officially disclosed the subject matter. "Gentleman, your attention please. This morning the enemy counter-attacked at five separate points along Middleton's VIII Corps boundary in the 1st Army sector."

The statement was received with hushed exchanges as all officers present began to absorb the news. Bradley displayed his usual incredulity and broke the silence, "Ike this is nothing more than a spoiling attack intended to draw Patton's troops out of the Saar." Eisenhower shook his head in disagreement, "This is no spoiling attack Brad." Then Eisenhower made what was quite possibly one of his most coherent decisions of the whole war when he issued orders to dispatch

the 10th and 7th Armored divisions to the Ardennes with all haste. 7th Armored would go to the German speaking Belgian town of St Vith and the 10th Armored were earmarked to get up to Bastogne.

Throughout the ensuing discussion Bradley remained in denial concerning the nature and purpose of the German attack despite the fact that the US 1st Army's G-2 had already transmitted a captured copy of German Field Marshall von Rundstedt's 'Order of the Day' to SHAEF. This document plainly illustrated the German objectives. The following day Eisenhower committed his strategic reserve, the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, to head north to the Ardennes. Precisely which division would go where would be determined while the paratroopers were en route. Poorly prepared and unsuitably attired, they would endure a freezing 13-hour ride in the backs of open tank transporters.

Bastogne is the main city in the Belgian province of Luxembourg that rests on an elevated plateau in the heart of the Belgian Ardennes. On a clear day it provides a commanding view of the surrounding area. Being centrally located, and where seven roads converged, it became a key strategic objective for both sides during this epic battle.

### Middleton's moves

On 16 December, the VIII Corps Commander, 55-year-old Major General Troy Middleton's HQ was located at the former Belgian army barracks on the northeast perimeter of Bastogne where it had been established since

## THE TIGERS OF BASTOGNE

Vanguard of Kampfgruppe Peiper 13km before Malmedy, December 1944

Image: Alamy



early September 1944. VIII Corps were lucky to have him. Sporting glasses as thick as jam jar bottoms and pugnacious features, Middleton was destined to be the right man in the right place at the right time. He had an impeccable combat record and was widely regarded as one of the most competent battlefield tacticians in the US Army during WWII. According to reports reaching his desk on that fateful day, the Germans were slicing through American lines like a hot knife through butter along an 89-mile front stretching from Aachen in the north all the way down to Luxembourg in the south. He had to act and act fast.

The Ardennes market town of Bastogne was garlanded with Christmas decorations in anticipation of the approaching festive season. As news filtered through to the resident garrison of men from the 28th Division Pennsylvania National Guard, the city became a hive of activity. Still licking their wounds after losing four-fifths of their number in the Battle of the Hürtgen forest the 28th prepared to move out east to meet their adversaries.

At his HQ, in the northern Luxembourg town of Wiltz, D-Day hero General 'Dutch' Cota attempted to relay information to Middleton who now faced the arduous task of formulating a cohesive plan to preserve and maintain his wafer-thin defences against this increasingly threatening tirade of Nazi troops and armour. He instinctively knew that he needed to slow or

stem the advance and buy time for the 1st and 3rd Armies to get into the line.

While the 9th Armored Division's CCR (Combat Command Reserve) covered the left flank of the 4th Infantry Division in Luxembourg, the 28th Infantry Division straddled the Our River and attempted to hold the centre ground. Just to the north of their position was the inexperienced 106th Infantry Division covering an area that extended almost 26 miles right up to the VIII Corps boundary with V Corps. Despite being unaware of the magnitude of the German attack Middleton managed to organise his thin defences in such a way that they would inevitably stagger and frustrate the enemy advance. When Manteuffel said after the war that German momentum began to dissipate in some sectors in those first crucial 24 hours, this can largely be attributed to Middleton's efforts.

### Sending in the Tiger Division

Up until 16 December SHAEF had considered the Ardennes as the quiet sector where very little had transpired up until that juncture. On the Luxembourg/Germany frontier the 28th's 110th Regiment was covering over 11 miles in the centre of the division sector. Like the 106th Infantry Division in the northern sector they were strung out far too thin to offer any concerted resistance. As overwhelming waves of German troops and armour struck out west in an attempt to reach the River Meuse the American line

gradually began to disintegrate. They were being attacked by General Hasso von Manteuffel's 5th Panzer Army, which was the least provisioned but the best led of all three German armies that had launched at 5.30am with the vain objective of eliminating all Allied resistance and re-taking the port city of Antwerp.

During that first day of the assault five German divisions swarmed across the Our River that snaked along the Luxembourg German border roughly 25 miles east of Bastogne. Two Panzer corps on Manteuffel's left flank soon devastated the thin lines of the 28th Division. On 16 December German forces on the Wiltz-Bastogne road had progressed rapidly and by late afternoon they were close to the city. The first German bomb to hit Bastogne impacted just outside the church of Saint Peter around midday.

The 10th Armored Division war room ticker clicked into life at 3.30am on 17 December as movement orders began to arrive. At that time the division was in the northern French town of Rémeling recuperating after heavy fighting around Metz. On receiving the news commanding officer of Combat Command B, 54-year-old Colonel William L. Roberts wasted no time in assembling his officers for an urgent briefing. The bespectacled Roberts had a sallow complexion and a demeanour more reminiscent of a funeral director than an army commander. He was known as a dour, feisty

# THE 10TH ARMORED DIVISION



ACTIVATED AT FORT BENNING, GEORGIA, 15 JULY 1942. THE 10TH ARMORED DIVISION WAS ASSIGNED TO PATTON'S 3RD ARMY ON ARRIVING AT CHERBOURG ON 23 SEPTEMBER 1944

While the US 10th Armored Division's Combat Command A were ordered to join the 4th Infantry Division at Echternach in Luxembourg to stem the attack of Brandenberger's 7th Panzer Army. Combat Command B was dispatched to Bastogne. They were the first of Patton's 3rd Army units to reach there December 18, 1944 and would precede the arrival of the 101st Airborne by about eight hours.

"When we arrived in Bastogne it was quite quiet and there were no civilians around," said Earl van Gorp, D Company, 3rd Tank Battalion. The civilians who hadn't managed to escape the city had taken to their cellars in anticipation of the approaching German offensive.

The 10th Armored Division nicknamed 'The Tiger Division' had arrived in Europe that September and had actively participated in Patton's punitive battles around Metz. When

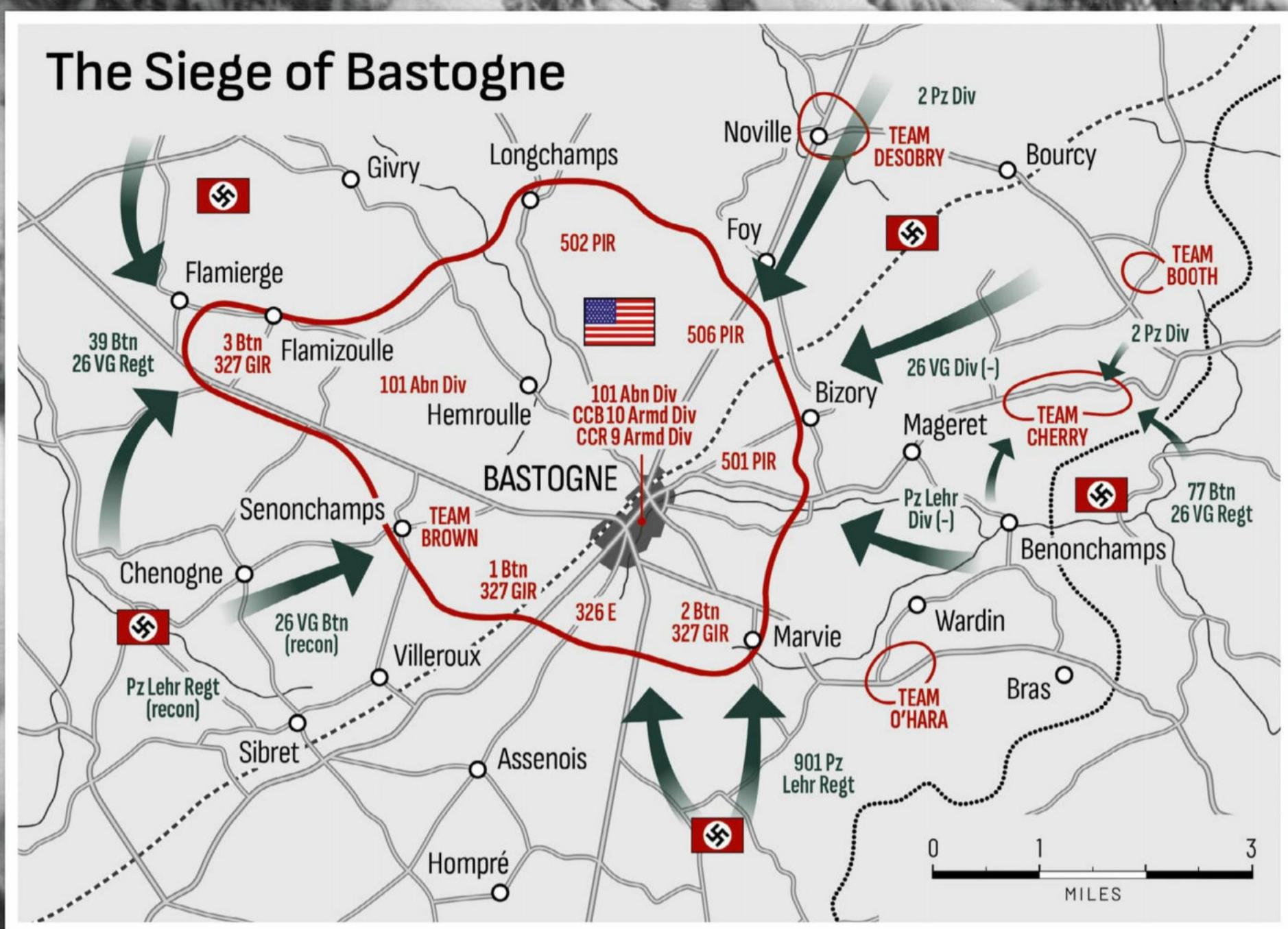
the three CCB teams arrived in Bastogne they were sent out to block three primary approach roads against overwhelming numbers of attacking German forces of Manteuffel's 5th Panzer Army. During those first integral 48 hours, although heavily outnumbered, they tenaciously refused to concede a single inch of ground and inflicted terrible casualties on the Germans. When the city became surrounded, survivors from Team Desobry and Team Cherry became Bastogne's 'fire brigade', a mobile reserve ready to strike where and when they were needed. Their fight didn't end when Patton's 4th Armored division entered Bastogne on the afternoon of 26 December. The CCB would provide additional armoured support and assist in deterring successive attempts by the Germans to take Bastogne until 18 January 1945.

**"ALTHOUGH HEAVILY OUTNUMBERED THEY TENACIOUSLY REFUSED TO CONCEDE A SINGLE INCH OF GROUND AND INFILCTED TERRIBLE CASUALTIES ON THE GERMANS"**

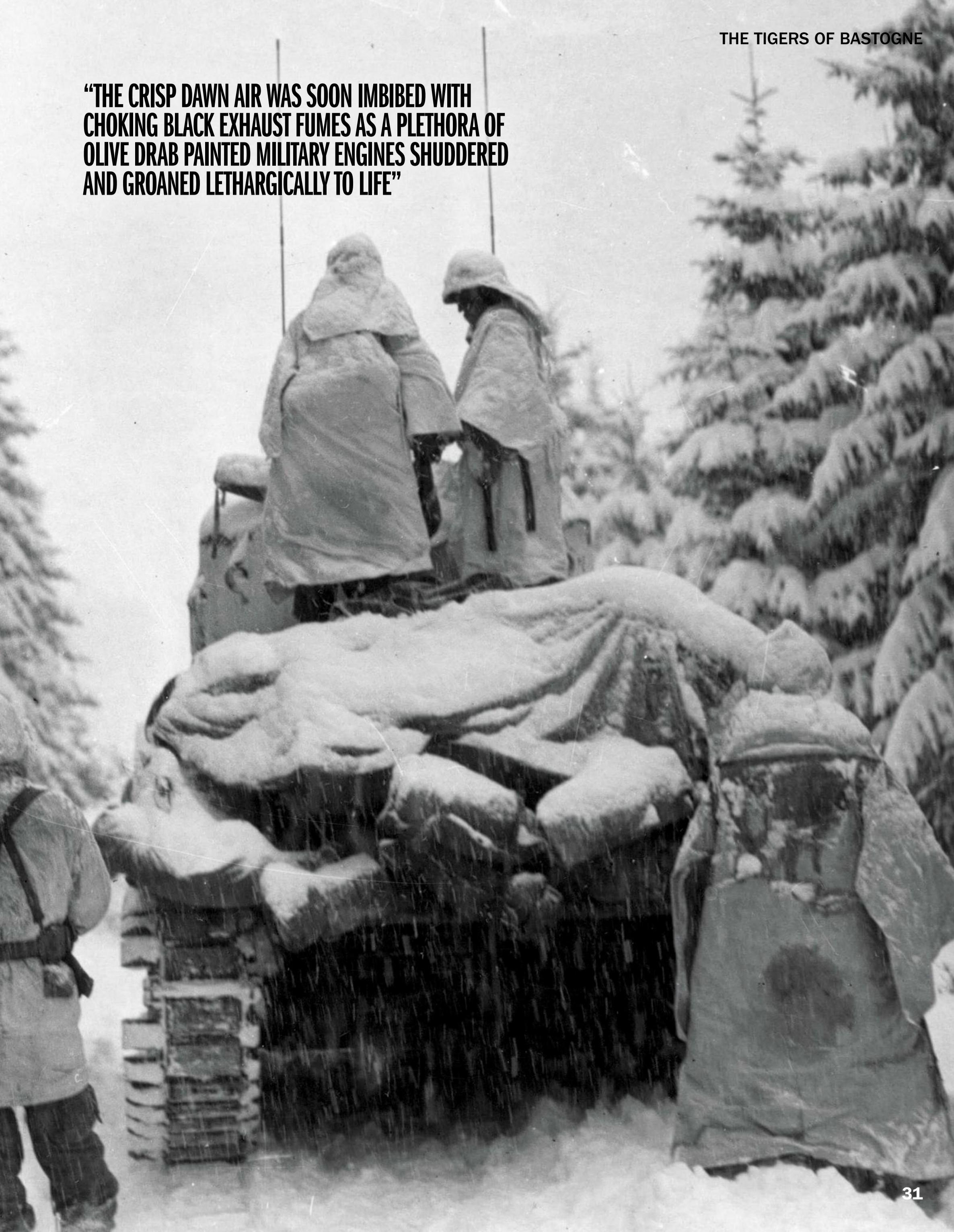
Infantryman pauses in advance through a forest during the Ardennes-Alsace campaign

Image: Alamy





**"THE CRISP DAWN AIR WAS SOON IMBIBED WITH CHOKING BLACK EXHAUST FUMES AS A PLETHORA OF OLIVE DRAB PAINTED MILITARY ENGINES SHUDDERED AND GROANED LETHARGICALLY TO LIFE"**



individual who never shied away from a fight. One of his subordinates, young Major William R. Desobry, known as Des to his friends, furrowed his brow as Roberts explained the urgency of the situation developing further north in the Ardennes region. Desobry's face and gaunt features made him appear considerably older than his 26 years. Lieutenant Colonel Henry T. Cherry and 'Smiling' Lt. Col. James O'Hara were also present. Cherry was known to be a strict disciplinarian who didn't lend his military acumen to spontaneous improvisation and preferred doing things by the book. The eldest of the three 'Team' commanders, he admired General Patton greatly and to some extent attempted to emulate him. O'Hara smiled. Even when the November rains had inundated the battlefields and the fighting had intensified around Metz, O'Hara had always sported a wide toothy grin that accentuated the roundness of his ruddy complexion. While some of his fellow officers found his smile reassuring and inspiring, others regarded it as downright disturbing.

### **"Move at a moment's notice"**

"Hell Colonel, we're Patton's 3rd Army but when we get up there we'll be 1st Army," moaned Desobry while shaking his head. Roberts peered above his glasses, "I don't think that will be a primary concern when you meet the enemy Des." The colonel wasn't entirely sure what to make of the recent reports, but an uncomfortable feeling in his lower abdomen indicated that if his instincts were right all was not well. He rose to his feet and addressed all three officers, "Get the men ready to move at a moment's notice." With a dismissive wave he concluded the meeting and sat down again

to peruse the maps laid out on his desk. Later on that same bitterly cold morning as the first hesitant rays of daylight began to illuminate the horizon of 10th Armored division's camp, reveille was accompanied by rousing calls to action. Within minutes frenzied activity erupted across the whole encampment. Stubble-faced GIs with heavy lidded eyes began laboriously loading up supplies of arms and ammunition onto various forms of transport in preparation for an imminent move north to Bastogne. The crisp dawn air was soon imbued with choking black exhaust fumes as a plethora of olive drab painted military engines shuddered and groaned lethargically to life. M3 halftracks, M4 Sherman tanks, M10 and M18 tank destroyers began carving deep furrows through the hoar frost as they formed up the column to begin the ride north. By 1.20pm on 17 December, in compliance with orders, Combat Command B, 10th Armored Division was making its first tentative steps toward Bastogne. Something big was happening up there.

### **Three teams, one aim**

Major Willis D. 'Crit' Crittenberger, HQ battery, 420th Armored field artillery battalion said, "We heard about the Bulge because we always tuned our halftrack radios to the BBC. Around 2.00am we got a warning order from Division HQ saying they were getting ready to go north. Then at 8.00am we got our orders to be part of CCB and go to Bastogne. On the 17th we drove 60 miles up to Luxembourg and stayed overnight."

Robert's Combat Command B (CCB) numbering just 2,700 men would be divided into three teams each named after their appointed commander. On the late afternoon of 18

December CCB arrived in Bastogne and Roberts promptly reported to Middleton, who issued specific instructions to organise roadblocks at the three main approaches to the city. While Team Desobry headed three miles straight north to Noville, Team Cherry wheeled east to Longvilly and Team O'Hara pivoted southeast to Bras. The remaining CCB forces were kept in Luxembourg to prevent the Germans from hitting Bastogne from the south. These three teams would be the first line of defence around Bastogne until reinforcements arrived.

Wayne Wickert of C Company, 55th Armored Engineer Battalion, 10th Armored Division joined Team Cherry out at Longvilly. He recalled, "When we arrived at Longvilly, a captain asked me, 'Are you an engineer?' 'Yes, sir,' I replied. 'In that case I may have a bridge for you to blow up'. In my truck I had about 25 landmines with 8lbs of TNT, and pipes full of TNT in it to shove into roadblocks to clear the way, [I also had] a couple of five-gallon cans of TNT for bridges. When the Germans began firing I went across the road and got up a real steep hill on the hill because the Germans were aiming at my truck. I got behind an evergreen tree, and I lay down in a prone position with my rifle. Next thing I knew I felt something on my neck, and I thought I was going to get the bayonet. When I pulled myself up my arm started flapping around, shrapnel had hit me. Then as small arms tore up the ground medics just grabbed my shirt and started running down the hill, and they were not a bit careful. I was holding my arm, and the bone was sticking out as they carried me down [and] the bone got stuck on a tree.

"I jumped on a halftrack and held on but asked if I could sit down, I was exhausted. I

*Three American M4 Sherman tanks at St Vith during the Battle of the Bulge*



**"WHEN I WOKE UP, THE FIRST THING I LOOKED FOR WAS MY ARM, WHICH THANKFULLY WAS STILL ATTACHED. I RECEIVED SEVEN PINTS OF BLOOD AFTER THAT AND WAS TRANSFERRED TO ENGLAND"**

Image: Alamy



# HEROES OF BASTOGNE

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE CALLED UPON MANY ACTS OF HEROISM AND BOLD LEADERSHIP



**PT. JOHN SCHAFFNER.**  
**SCOUT 589TH FAB, 106TH INFANTRY DIVISION**

Two regiments of the 106th Infantry Division, around 6,800 surrendered. Schaffner was one of the lucky ones. His unit managed to escape and fight on.



**CLAIR BENNETT, F COMPANY, 90TH CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON (MECHANIZED)**  
The 90th endured a hard fight out at Longvilly but by 28 December the 1st and 2nd platoons had been assigned as mobile reserve for Team Cherry.



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL TROY HOUSTON MIDDLETON AND GENERAL EISENHOWER**  
Both General Patton and General Bradley requested Troy Middleton's assistance. His abilities as a military tactician were in great demand at SHAEF.



**COLONEL WILLIAM LYNN ROBERTS COMMANDER CCB, 10TH ARMORED DIVISION**  
On 20 December Middleton told Roberts, "Your work has been quite satisfactory." From that point on CCB were attached to the 101st Airborne Division.



**MAJOR WILLIAM DESOBRY 'TEAM DESOBRY'**  
After the Battle of the Bulge Desobry went on to become a two-star major general and served during the Vietnam War. He retired in 1975.



**LIEUTENANT COLONEL HENRY THOMAS CHERRY, JR. 'TEAM CHERRY'**  
Cherry was a West Point graduate who did things by the book, widely regarded as an excellent tank tactician he died in 1953 while serving as a US Army colonel.



**LIEUTENANT 'SMILING' JAMES O'HARA. TEAM O'HARA**  
Lieutenant James O'Hara was awarded the Silver Star for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity while serving with the 10th Armored Division during World War II.



**MAJOR WILLIS D. 'CRIT' CRITTENBERGER JR, HQ BATTERY 420TH AFAB**  
Crittenberger Jr. was promoted to lieutenant colonel on Christmas Eve 1944 by General Patton, who also awarded him a Legion of Merit.



**PHILIP WILLIAM 'PHIL' BURGE C COMPANY, 55TH ARMORED ENGINEER BATTALION**  
Phil became the secretary of the 10th Armored Division Association and returned to Bastogne many times before he passed away 9 March 2018.

backed up to the door as blood congealed in my sleeve. There was a solid clot of blood that slid out, and when it hit the floor, the radioman threw up. As he jumped outside a machine-gun cut loose, and I could hear the tinning on the side of the halftrack. There was a tank there, a Sherman, which silenced the machine-gun. When I got to an aid station in a house, they put some dressing and a steel rod on my arm, and wrapped it up close to my body. A medic stuck a needle in my vein that was spurting, and I was going to ask him about the needle, but I passed out. When I woke up, the first thing I looked for was my arm, which thankfully was still attached. I received seven pints of blood after that and was transferred to England."

### "Hold at all costs"

After his meeting with Middleton during the late afternoon of 18 December, Roberts connected with the vanguard of his column one mile south of the city whereupon, after briefly scanning a map and choosing a favourable position for the armoured artillery, he relayed Middleton's orders to the respective team commanders. Physically getting into the city was no easy matter because access to the southern approach roads was becoming severely impeded by corps personnel and an increasing number of stragglers homing in from the east. Some of these were assigned as military police to supplement the MPs already assigned to CCB. They would be dispatched to intersections to the south and southeast of Bastogne armed with strict instruction to prevent any soldiers attempting to escape the coming battle and turn them back to the CCB area.

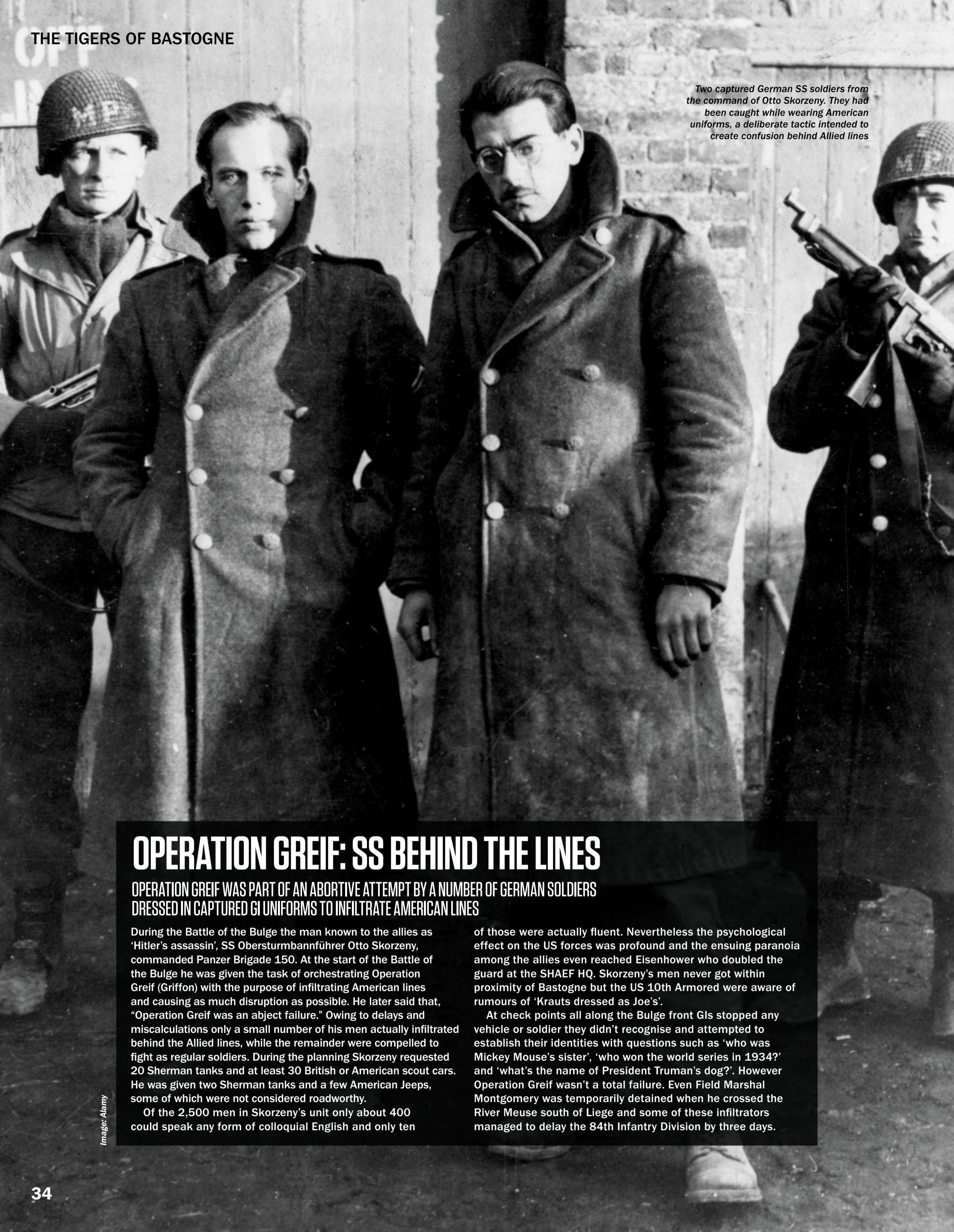
At 6.15pm as the long winter night descended on Bastogne CCB, now under the direct control of VIII Corps, were provided with additional units, the 35th and 158th combat engineer battalions to augment their forces. These two units were designated as infantry to enhance the defence of the city. Remnants of various other units who were drifting back to Bastogne would be allocated later. Roberts sent out a detail to retrieve these stragglers and billet them at locations in proximity to his CP at the Hotel LeBrun on the Rue Marche just a few yards from the city's main square. He managed to assemble around 250 men, mostly from the 28th Infantry Division and some from the 9th Armored Division. Collectively this ad hoc reserve became known as the SNAFU unit (Situation Normal All Fouled Up).

The three teams, supported by three batteries of the 420th Armored Field artillery battalion, would be tasked with establishing defensive blocking positions to hinder or prevent the advancing enemy forces from capturing this key city, with specific instructions from Middleton to "hold at all costs". They would face the full force of that German onslaught alone until reinforcements from one of the airborne divisions reached the city.

"When we got into Noville around midnight we heard that the enemy was coming down the road and they fired on the outpost," said Jerry Goolkasian, B Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, "This was the first connection with the Germans around the area of Bastogne on the night of the 18th. The Germans pulled back because they believed they had run into a bigger force than they actually had. The halftrack behind us got hit and that was flaring up all night. Ziggy, my



US soldiers fire at Germans positions to relieve besieged airborne troops in Bastogne, Belgium



Two captured German SS soldiers from the command of Otto Skorzeny. They had been caught while wearing American uniforms, a deliberate tactic intended to create confusion behind Allied lines

## OPERATION GREIF: SS BEHIND THE LINES

OPERATION GREIF WAS PART OF AN ABORTIVE ATTEMPT BY A NUMBER OF GERMAN SOLDIERS DRESSED IN CAPTURED GI UNIFORMS TO INFILTRATE AMERICAN LINES

During the Battle of the Bulge the man known to the allies as 'Hitler's assassin', SS Obersturmbannführer Otto Skorzeny, commanded Panzer Brigade 150. At the start of the Battle of the Bulge he was given the task of orchestrating Operation Greif (Griffon) with the purpose of infiltrating American lines and causing as much disruption as possible. He later said that, "Operation Greif was an abject failure." Owing to delays and miscalculations only a small number of his men actually infiltrated behind the Allied lines, while the remainder were compelled to fight as regular soldiers. During the planning Skorzeny requested 20 Sherman tanks and at least 30 British or American scout cars. He was given two Sherman tanks and a few American Jeeps, some of which were not considered roadworthy.

Of the 2,500 men in Skorzeny's unit only about 400 could speak any form of colloquial English and only ten

of those were actually fluent. Nevertheless the psychological effect on the US forces was profound and the ensuing paranoia among the allies even reached Eisenhower who doubled the guard at the SHAEF HQ. Skorzeny's men never got within proximity of Bastogne but the US 10th Armored were aware of rumours of 'Krauts dressed as Joe's'.

At check points all along the Bulge front GIs stopped any vehicle or soldier they didn't recognise and attempted to establish their identities with questions such as 'who was Mickey Mouse's sister', 'who won the world series in 1934?' and 'what's the name of President Truman's dog?'. However Operation Greif wasn't a total failure. Even Field Marshal Montgomery was temporarily detained when he crossed the River Meuse south of Liege and some of these infiltrators managed to delay the 84th Infantry Division by three days.

*German troops advancing past abandoned American equipment*



*Image: Alamy*

driver, and I got some .50 calibre ammunition from the burning halftrack because we were desperate for ammunition."

#### "Never heard of Bastogne"

Precisely why Bastogne was so important to the Germans became self evident during the battle. OKW had identified the strategic location of the city during the initial planning stages for the offensive. It had been generally agreed that the two key cities of Bastogne and St Vith needed to be taken within the first 24 hours of the offensive if they were to succeed in their intended objective of recapturing Antwerp. Many of Hitler's generals at the time had been reduced to obsequious nodding sycophants who didn't dare to voice their reservations about the plan known as 'Wacht am Rhein' (Watch on the Rhine). Field Marshal Otto Moritz Walter Model was one of the very few who openly disagreed with the whole plan at a time when Hitler's temperament was at best unpredictable and at worst murderous.

One of the reasons for this may have been the abortive attempt on his life that occurred in July 1944 instigated by General Von Stauffenberg and other high-ranking military men. It was while recuperating from injuries sustained during this failed assassination attempt that the Führer ruminated on the prospects of going on the offensive in the west. General Hasso-Eccard Freiherr Von Manteuffel, general of the 5th Army, also harboured serious reservations, which he voiced to Von Rundstedt who secretly concurred but neither dared to openly state their opinions. The semantics and machinations of the planned Nazi offensive were superfluous to the 10th Armored CCB as the teams arrived to take up positions at their pre-designated locations.

"I remember going through the town of Arlon in the afternoon of December 18th it was a scene out of a Christmas card. It was snowing,

## "I HAD NEVER HEARD OF BASTOGNE, BUT SOMETHING TOLD ME THAT IT WAS A NAME THAT I WOULD NEVER FORGET"

but the Christmas lights were on, people were shopping and it was about the prettiest scene you could ever imagine. After passing through Arlon we made a turn in the road and the truck headlights showed a sign saying 'Bastogne', white letters on a dark blue background. I had never heard of Bastogne, but something told me that it was a name that I would never forget," recalled Phil Burge, C Company, 55th Armored Engineer Battalion. "We reached Bastogne by 7.00 or 8.00pm, we spent the first night in the railroad station."

"Put those tank destroyers on point and gather all the ammo you can lay your hands on. Good luck and God be with you," shouted Major William Desobry to his advance guard, comprising of an intelligence and reconnaissance Platoon, 20th AIB, and a section of 1st Platoon, troop D, 90th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (CRS). They had entered Noville at around 10.00pm. At the time nobody suspected that the 'perfect storm' was about to break. A soldier from an armoured platoon that had fallen back into Noville near midnight provided Desobry with a graphic description of the enemy forces moving in their direction, and added, "The whole goddam German army is heading this way major."

#### In the thick of the fog

Team Cherry had been warned that they might encounter elements of the US 9th Armored Division's CCR along the way. When they arrived in Longvilly they were dismayed to discover the

whole village jam-packed with CCR vehicles retreating in apparent disorder. Tanks, trucks and troop-filled halftracks produced a nigh on impossible traffic situation on the narrow approach road as Team Cherry endeavoured to get up to the line. The 9th Armored had been badly mauled while attempting to stem the German advance and had suffered terrible casualties, but it had been a valiant effort.

"When anyone asks me where I was during the battle I tell them 'hell I was everywhere,'" said Bob Sheehan veteran of the 9th Armored.

Just three miles southeast of Bastogne in the village of Wardin, Team O'Hara established a road block on the high ground but the elevation didn't provide any real advantage due to the all-encompassing fog that reduced visibility to ten yards in some places. They had no idea that they were in the path of General Fritz Bayerlein's dreaded Panzer Lehr and General Kokott's 26th Volksgrenadier division currently striking out for Bastogne from the east.

All three team commanders were essentially faced with the same inclement weather problem. One Belgian/Congolese nurse named Augusta Chiwy who had returned from up north to spend Christmas with her father in Bastogne described the weather, "The fog was so thick you could cut it with a knife." As long as it persisted tactical air support was impossible. This 'Hitler Weather' was a potentially serious impediment, but some US forces managed to turn it to their advantage. "They didn't know how many we had and we didn't know how many they had, we just had to fight like hell and hope for the best," said Bob Parker, C Company, 21st Tank Battalion. "There were a couple of divisions that had been overrun and they were retreating back through our lines. We had set up a roadblock and the next thing I knew I saw, something similar to our halftrack or a truck, I shot it and I hit it. We lost a couple of tanks that first day. I think we had three left

## THE TIGERS OF BASTOGNE



**Above: The wreckage of a German tank, destroyed near Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes area of Belgium**



in our platoon at the end." Bob would later be re-assigned to Team SNAFU.

The 101st Airborne 'Screaming Eagles' were originally designated to go to Werbomont on the northern shoulder to check the advance of the SS in that sector, but were redirected to Bastogne when the 82nd Airborne got ahead of them on the road north through Luxembourg. With the commander General Maxwell Taylor back in Washington DC attending a conference, Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe assumed command of the division. As lead elements of the 101st Airborne Division reached Bastogne late on 18 December McAuliffe immediately went to VIII Corps headquarters in Bastogne to talk with Middleton. The 101st received direct orders to take up positions in support of the CCB teams who were already in place.

x said, "O'Hara had been sent out to the southeast to block a road coming to the town of Wiltz which was a high speed road, and Cherry was moving out to the town of Longvilly to block that road, and I was going due north to a town of Noville and I was to block that road. They really didn't know what the situation was, except the Germans had broken through the 28th Division and somewhere to the east of us; that Germans were using American equipment and some of them were dressed in American uniforms and some of them civilian uniforms. So you had to watch out for that."

A company of paratroopers from the 1st battalion, 506th, commanded by Lieutenant LaPrade was ordered up to Noville to assist Team Desobry. When they arrived a slight altercation occurred between LaPrade and Desobry's regarding who was in charge. Such details were superfluous to Phil Burge as he observed the paratroopers arriving in Bastogne, "They had come in by truck, since it was

impossible to drop them in by air. Eventually the whole division of the 101st Airborne was in Bastogne. But we were there first."

### Ten to one against

The fighting in Noville began in earnest at 5.30am on 19 December when a group of German 2nd Panzer Division halftracks emerged from the fog. GIs manning an outpost on the Bourcy road that converged on the village of Noville couldn't determine whether they were friend or foe. In an attempt to discover the identity of the approaching vehicles a GI sentry shouted 'Halt!' four times. Suddenly a voice responded in German. That was the timely cue for Desobry's men to shower the lead vehicle with hand grenades. Several explosions followed as agonised, feral howls of pain and derision emanated from the halftrack as spurts of blood and severed limbs were ejected into the freezing air. The GIs immediately dispatched the bloodied survivors who attempted to crawl out. Close-quarter fighting ensued for around 20 minutes as the opposing forces hammered away with grenades and small arms. It was 'game on'.

Despite overwhelming odds of around ten to one, in two days team Desobry disabled 31 tanks and halted the entire 2nd German Panzer Division, which had assumed it was opposing a much stronger force. During the fighting Desobry was wounded and captured and LaPrade was killed outright when a bomb impacted their CP. Col. Roberts repeatedly refused to give Desobry permission to fall back on Bastogne even when he was personally visited by Desobry, whose left eyeball was resting on his cheek due to the percussion from the blast that destroyed his CP. On 20 December Roberts finally acquiesced.

On 21 December the survivors of Team Cherry were ordered back to Bastogne and assigned to 101st Airborne Division's mobile

reserve. Team O'Hara held out until Patton's 3rd Army arrived on 26 December. All three team leaders survived the battle.

General Troy Middleton's expert delaying tactics and the 10th Armored CCB teams severely disrupted the German timetable. Bastogne would hold against repeated German attacks and the gargantuan efforts of the men who got there first would be overshadowed by the exploits of the 101st Airborne Division.

General McAuliffe would later remark, "It seems regrettable to me that Combat command B of the 10th Armored division didn't get the credit it deserved at the battle of Bastogne. All the newspaper and radio talk was about the paratroopers.

"Actually the 10th Armored division was in there a day before we were and had some very hard fighting before we ever got into it, and I sincerely believe that we would never have been able to get into Bastogne if it had not been for the defensive fighting of the three elements of the 10th Armored division who were first into Bastogne and protected the town from invasion by the Germans."

The 10th Armored Division left Bastogne for good on 17 and 18 January and headed to the Saar-Moselle triangle to continue their fight against the Third Reich. They would fight on through Germany and eventually cross the Danube in Czechoslovakia with Patton's 3rd Army. When the war concluded they were in the Austrian Alps 20 miles from Innsbruck.



The author of this article and official 10th Armored Division historian Mike Collins helped to organise a memorial plaque to the 10th Armored Division, which now stands beside a Sherman tank turret in Bastogne. It was unveiled and dedicated 10 December 2011.



### A1361 T34-85 112 FACTORY PRODUCTION

PT-34/85, ZAVOD 112

Reportedly attached to the 9th Tank Corps, Red Army, 1945.



T-34/85 ZAVOD 112

Attached to the 1st Czechoslovak Tank Brigade, 1952.



### A1359 TIGER-1, MID VERSION

PANZERKAMPFWAGEN VI TIGER I (MID)

Attached to schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 (424), during Operation Hubertus, Nipinzy area, Soviet Union, March 1944.



PANZERKAMPFWAGEN VI TIGER I (MID)

Attached to schwere Panzer-Abteilung 502 (511), Estonia/Latvia area, 1944.



### A1355 JAGDPANZER 38 TONNE HETZER, EARLY VERSION

JAGDPANZER 38(T) HETZER (EARLY VERSION)

Attached to Heeres Panzerjäger Abteilung 731, summer, 1944.



JAGDPANZER 38(T) ALS BEFEHLSWAGEN

Attached to Heeres Panzerjäger Abteilung 731, circa 1944-45.



**1:35**

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# EYLAU

During the War of the Fourth Coalition, Napoleon's Grande Armée was pushed to its limits against Prussian and Russian allies

WORDS BERNARD WILKIN AND RENÉ WILKIN

<b>OPPOSING FORCES</b>	
	
<b>FRENCH</b>	<b>vs</b>
LEADER	LEADER
Napoleon	General Bennigsen
<b>INFANTRY</b>	<b>INFANTRY</b>
54,000 men	67,000 men
<b>ARTILLERY</b>	<b>ARTILLERY</b>
200 pieces	300 pieces
<b>RESERVES</b>	<b>RESERVES</b>
10,000 (Ney's VI Corps)	10,000 (Corps of Lestoc)



The campaign of 1806 began with the French victories of Jena and Auerstedt against the Prussians. Napoleon, having captured most major cities of Germany, marched east to crush remaining enemy forces. In December of the same year the Russian army came to the rescue of Frederick William III and his men who were retreating toward western Prussia. The first battles against the French, such as Czarnowo, Pultusk and Golymin, resulted in more Napoleonic victories but failed to bring a decisive result. In January 1807 General von Bennigsen, a German officer commanding the Russian army, went on the offensive in east Prussia but was also forced to retreat after a French counteroffensive. If Napoleon managed to push back his foe, he failed to turn the enemy. After being pursued for days Bennigsen

## "NAPOLEON, HAVING CAPTURED MOST MAJOR CITIES OF GERMANY, MARCHED EAST TO CRUSH REMAINING ENEMY FORCES"

decided to make a stand with his Prussian allies at Eylau on 7 February 1807.

Having chased the enemy for 11 days in the bitter cold the French army was exhausted. Napoleon's forces were made up of 54,000 soldiers and 200 guns: the III Corps (15,000 men led by Davout), the IV Corps (16,500 men led by Soult), the VII Corps (6,500 men led by Augereau), the imperial guard (6,000 men) and the cavalry reserve (10,000 men under Murat). Ney's VI Corps (9,000 to 10,000 men) was pursuing a Prussian Corps but was expected to arrive on the battlefield. On paper, the Russian

army was stronger with 67,000 men. Bennigsen was also hoping to be reinforced by the Prussian Corps of Lestoc (10,000 men).

On 7 February 1807 the Russians' rear guard of Prince Bagration occupied a plateau not far from the small town of Preussich-Eylau. The prince was ordered to delay the French as long as possible to let the heavy artillery reach the main bulk of the Russian army beyond Eylau. At 2.00pm Marshal Soult sent forward the 18th and 46th

Napoleon On The Field Of The Battle Of Eylau by Antoine Jean Gros

PREUSSISCHE EYLAU, EAST PRUSSIA (NOW BAGRATIONOVSK, KALININGRAD OBLAST, RUSSIA) 7 & 8 FEBRUARY 1807

regiments of line infantry. Three regiments defending the plateau were promptly defeated but the Russian cavalry came to the rescue and charged the 18th Regiment's left wing. The dragoons of Klein's division, seeing the danger early, were able to push them back.

Meanwhile the French entered the town of Eylau, where they found Russian regiments positioned in the church and the cemetery. Fighting bitterly until 10.00pm, both sides lost about 4,000 men until the French were able to secure the objective. Napoleon, unwilling to engage the enemy at night, positioned Legrand's division in front of Eylau while Saint-Hilaire's division was placed to the right and Davout's men to the left.

The next day both sides were occupying parallel ridges but the Russian position was significantly longer than the French one. Napoleon, who had less men to engage, strengthened Eylau while sending Davout on the right and hoping for Ney's arrival on the left. The French artillery was brought forward to face its Russian counterpart. General Bennigsen hoped to attract the French in the middle of his position. From right to left, his line was made of the following divisions: Tuczov, Essen, Sacken and Ostermann. They were supported by 170 artillery pieces. Gallitzin's cavalry was spread on the wings and behind the centre where 70

pieces of horse artillery were also positioned. Behind the first line were placed the reserve divisions of Somo, Doctorov, Kamenski and Markov's Corps on the right wing. On the left the remnants of Baggowout's and Barclay de Tolly's Corps occupied Serpalen.

This four kilometre frontline was less than a mile from the town of Eylau. The battlefield was far from ideal. Several ponds, left unnoticed, were hidden by the snow.

Bennigsen, knowing that the French's right was supported by Davout, launched his own right to turn the enemy. On the other side, Napoleon ordered Davout to go forward, counting on Ney to stop the threat on his left flank. Between 7.00am and 8.00am Russian cannons fired violently at Eylau and Saint-Hilaire's division. So violent was the barrage that the trees close to Napoleon's position caught fire. The Russian right began moving under heavy fire but was pushed back by Leval's division. Meanwhile Friand's division managed to destabilise the enemy's left. Morand's division followed.

At 10.00am Napoleon ordered Augereau to strike the Russian centre. Saint-Hilaire, belonging to Soult's Corps, was asked to support the assault to prevent the formation of a gap between Augereau and Davout. Marshal Augereau, so ill that he had to be helped onto his horse, brought his men toward the south of the cemetery before deploying them. Augereau's flanks were supported by Generals Desjardins and Heudelet. Sénaumont's artillery, not far from the cemetery, was brought forward to support Augereau. However snow was falling so heavily that visibility was reduced to two feet. Such dramatic weather blinded the French who began to march to the left, exposing their flank to the enemy's centre. Fired at short range by 72 artillery pieces, Augereau's men were pushed back by Russian cavalry.

Captain Marbot described the scene, "The heavy guns that were in a semicircle around Augereau belched forth such a hail of grape and canister as had never been seen within human memory. In one instant our two

### **"THE HEAVY GUNS THAT WERE IN A SEMICIRCLE AROUND AUGEREAU BELCHED FORTH SUCH A HAIL OF GRAPE AND CANISTER AS HAD NEVER BEEN SEEN WITHIN HUMAN MEMORY"**

Source: Wiki/ Kaganer





*Prussian infantry attacking French troops in forest near Kutschitten*

divisions were rent to pieces by the storm of iron. General Desjardins was killed, General Heudelet dangerously wounded. Still they held their ground, until the army corps being almost entirely destroyed, its fragments had force to be recalled to the neighbourhood of the cemetery of Eylau; always excepting the 14th, who, wholly surrounded by the enemy, remained on the little hill which it had occupied."

As Marbot explained, the tragedy was not over yet, "The 14th of the line had remained alone on a hillock, which it could not quit except by the Emperor's order. The snow had ceased

for the moment; we could see how the intrepid regiment, surrounded by the enemy, was waving its eagle in the air to show that it still held its ground and asked for support. The Emperor, touched by the grand devotion of these brave men, resolved to try to save them, and ordered Augereau to send an officer to them with orders to leave the hillock, form a small square, and make their way towards us, while a brigade of cavalry should march in their direction and assist their efforts. This was before Murat's great charge. It was almost impossible to carry out the Emperor's wishes, because a swarm of



*Marbot, who as a cavalry captain, witnessed the destruction of the 14th regiment of line infantry*

Cossacks was between us and the 14th, and it was clear that any officer who was sent towards the unfortunate regiment would be killed or captured before he could get to it. But the order was positive and the marshal had to comply."

*The charge at Eylau has been described as the greatest in history*



## GREAT BATTLES

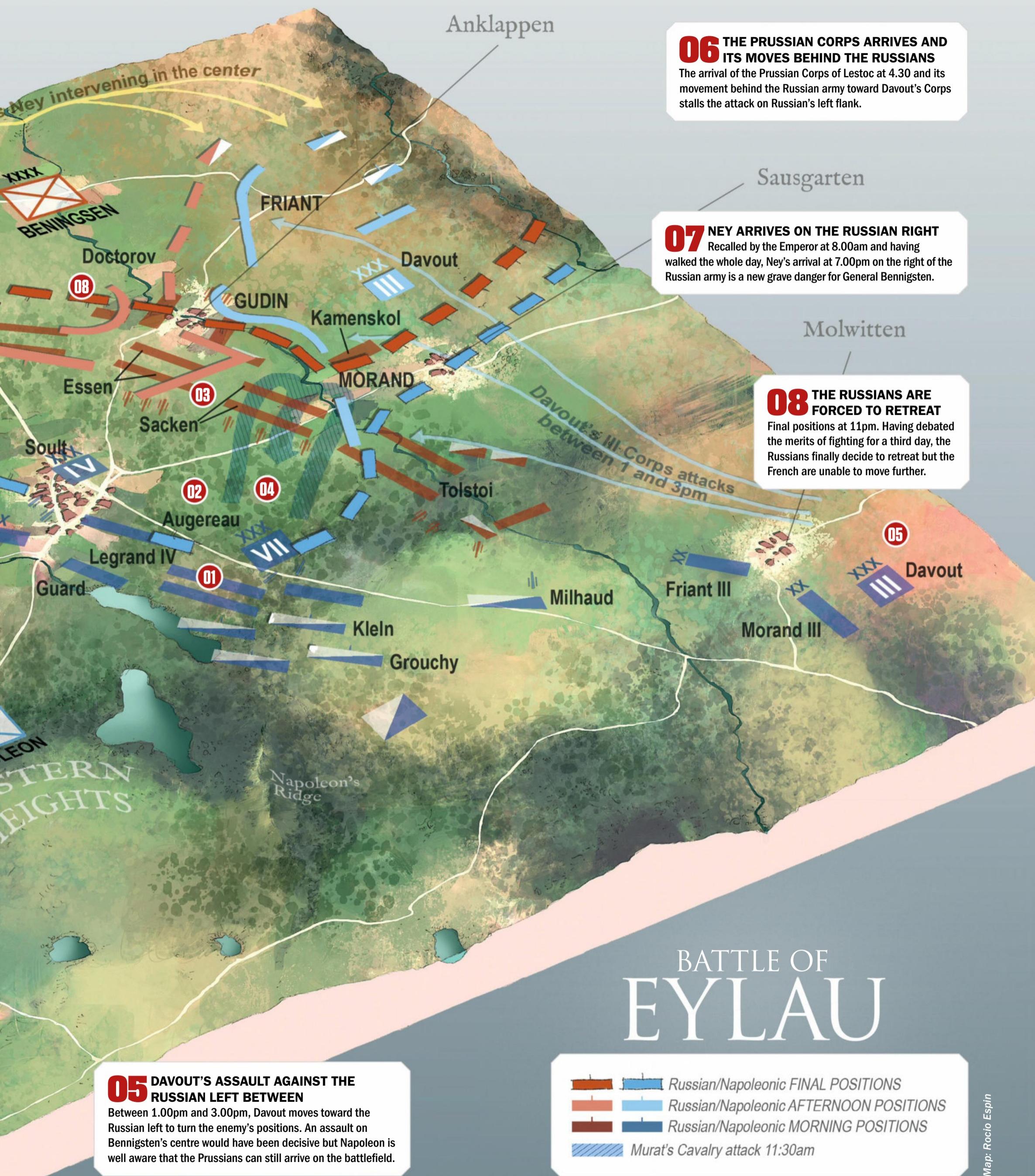
Marbot was ordered to reach the 14th regiment, "I found the 14th formed in square on the top of the hillock, but as the slope was very slight the enemy's cavalry had been able to deliver several charges. These had been vigorously repulsed, and the French regiment was surrounded by a circle of dead horses and dragoons, which formed a kind of rampart, making the position by this time almost inaccessible to cavalry." Marbot was able to reach the centre and gave his orders to the battalion's chief. "I see no means of saving the regiment," said the major, "return to the Emperor, bid him farewell from the 14th of the line, which has faithfully executed his orders, and bear to him the eagle which he gave us, and which we can defend no longer it would add too much to the pain of death to see it fall into the hands of the enemy. Then the major handed me his eagle. Saluted for the last time by the glorious fragment of the intrepid regiment with cries of 'Vive l'Empereur!' they were going to die for him. It was the Caesar morituri te salutant of Tacitus but in this case, the cry was uttered by heroes."

Out of 6,500 men the VII Corps suffered 929 soldiers killed in action and 4,271 wounded. The moment was dangerous. A hole had opened south of Eylau, right where Napoleon was standing, between Saint-Hilaire's division and Davout's Corps on one side and the rest of the army on the other side. The Russian cavalry was prompt to counterattack and managed to disorganise Saint-Hilaire's division. Napoleon launched Murat and his 11,000-strong cavalry reserve to repulse the Russians. To many, this remains one of the greatest charges in history. Led by the flamboyant Marshal himself this desperate gamble managed to open the first Russian line but the second, supported by the artillery, managed to hold. The first line closed again before attacking the French cavalry's back. Seeing this the French emperor

Image: Alamy

General Levin August von Bennigsen, the commander of the Imperial Russian army







The French cavalry charge on 8 February 1807

Source: Wiki/Kozam

sent Colonel Lepic and his six squadrons of grenadiers of the imperial guard, followed by General Dahlmann and his chasseurs. Two lines of Russian infantry were broken but a third managed to resist, backed against a wood. The French cavalry was considerably weakened but had managed to stop the Russian offensive and reformed behind the town of Eylau. During this action General Dahlmann and d'Hautpoul were mortally wounded.

At the same time a column of 4,000 Russian grenadiers went straight toward the cemetery where Napoleon was standing. A battalion of grenadiers of the French guard, led by General Dorset, charged the enemy while a squadron of chasseurs and the Bruyère brigade attacked from the flank and behind. The 4,000 Russians were almost all killed or captured. Bennigsen's centre was now exposed. A counterattack would probably have been victorious but Napoleon had only eight battalions of the

imperial guard and had to hold them back to face a potential Prussian flank assault. Stuck in the middle the French Emperor was hoping that Davout could win the battle on the right flank. However the situation was not much better there. Saint-Hilaire had been forced to retreat after the VII Corps' disaster. Klein, who had just charged with Murat, saw a potential threat and brought forward a brigade. Davout, meanwhile, rallied in person Morand's division. At that point the rest of the III Corps was able to resume the assault, helped by Milhaud's cavalry.

While Russian cohesion was on the verge of collapsing Bennigsen went missing. He had personally ridden to meet Prussian General Lestoc and his 8,000 men in order to hasten the march to the battlefield. The Prussian corps passed behind the Russian right to reach the left before facing Davout. Fresh troops had a positive effect on Russian morale. Despite this new threat the French Marshal managed to



Image: Alamy

The 14th regiment of line infantry giving its eagle to Captain Marbot during its final stand-off

hold the position for another three hours giving enough time for Ney to arrive on the Russians' right. His intervention at 7.00pm as well as Bernadotte's potential threat forced Bennigsen to retreat. The Russian commander and his generals argued for continuing the fight the next day but ultimately decided at 11.00pm to withdraw from the battlefield. The French were too exhausted to pursue the enemy.

The battlefield remained in French hands. But was it really a victory? Both armies claimed victory. Official French losses were relatively low. The Bulletins de la Grande armée, a tool of propaganda, announced 1,900 dead and 5,700 wounded for 7,000 enemy casualties and many more wounded abandoned by the Russians while retreating. These numbers are highly suspicious. Napoleon, who was known to write for the bulletin, lowered the number of French victims on the battlefield to preserve his army's morale and his reputation at home. In fact

**"A FATHER WHO LOSES HIS CHILDREN  
DOES NOT HAVE THE APPETITE FOR  
VICTORY. WHEN THE HEART SPEAKS,  
GLORY HAS NO ILLUSION"**



witnesses claimed that out of 60,000 French soldiers on the battlefield, 20,000 were either killed or wounded. Marbot wrote, "Never since the invention of gunpowder had its effects been so terrible. Of all battles, ancient or modern, Eylau was that in which the proportion of loss to combatants was greatest. The Russians had 25,000 men disabled, and although the number of French who were touched by steel or lead was reported at 10,000 only, I estimate them as at least 20,000. The total for the two armies was thus 45,000 men, of whom more than half died. Augereau's corps was almost entirely destroyed as 15,000 combatants present under arms when the action began, there remained in the evening only 3,000, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Massy, the Marshal, all the generals and all the colonels being either killed or wounded. The day following the battle, Marshal Ney said "what a massacre and without result".

Generals d'Hautpoul, Desjardins, Corbineau, Dahlmann, Bonnet, Varé were killed or mortally wounded. The French lost six eagles or flags. Napoleon knew perfectly well how this outcome could be used by the enemies of France.

This bloody encounter was a stain on his almost perfect military career. Unusually he stayed for eight days, from 8 to 16 February 1807, on the battlefield. Two explanations can be offered for such a long stay.

The amount of casualties was probably shocking, even for a man used to witness the consequences of mass violence. There is little doubt that he wanted to evacuate as many wounded soldiers as possible, but he also wanted to be certain that all potential trophies had been removed. French propaganda later claimed that the winner was the side holding the ground at the end of the day. This idea was directly inspired by the Corsican general. On 12 February of the same year Napoleon wrote that,

"A father who loses his children does not have the appetite for victory. When the heart speaks, glory has no illusion." In fact victory was so bitter that no mass was sung to celebrate it. Around the same time the French Emperor wrote an official account of the battle.

The end-result was a booklet with the articles from the bulletins but also a so-called 'narration of the Eylau battle by a witness, translated from German' penned by the emperor himself. This was a clear attempt to control the narrative of what had happened on 7 and 8 February 1807.

After the battle military operations were halted for months. Peace offers were sent to the Prussians, but these were rejected. Napoleon had failed to totally destroy the enemy and had to wait until 4 June, after having reinforced his army, to resume his offensive against the Russians and the Prussians. On 14 June 1807 he was to crush General Bennigsen and the Russians at the battle of Friedland.

# LONE WOLF

## BRITAIN'S NIGHT FIGHTER 'ACE'



Richard Playne Stevens is an all but 'unknown' hero of the Blitz, but was its leading night fighter 'ace'

WORDS ANDY SAUNDERS



**A**s the Luftwaffe moved away from mass daylight bombing operations against Britain during September 1940, the RAF faced a dilemma. Thus far it had scant night-fighting capabilities. Such assets that RAF Fighter Command had were virtually untested and untried, although there had been initial success with Airborne Interception radar (AI) mounted in Blenheim aircraft of the Fighter Interception Unit during July 1940. However the Luftwaffe recognised that cover of darkness provided better protection for its aircraft operating over Britain given the paucity of its night defences. Essentially such defences comprised anti-aircraft artillery and barrage balloons.

Fighter defence, for the most part, comprised RAF day fighters sent aloft to search for enemy aircraft in what was mostly a futile and desperate exercise. But, if the secret weapon of Airborne Interception radar was to ultimately change Britain's night-time air defence, there was yet a stopgap 'secret weapon' – the 'Cat's Eyes' fighter pilot.

Most who have some knowledge of the 1939-45 air war will surely tell you, without hesitation, that 'Cat's Eyes' was Group Captain John Cunningham. In that belief, they would only be partly correct. True, it was a moniker attached to Cunningham in light of his success as a night fighter. Cunningham himself later explained how it came about, dispelling any

notion he was a 'Cat's Eyes' pilot, "Flight Lieutenant Richard Stevens was the only night fighter pilot who achieved success at night solely by the use of his own eyes."

"Because of the need for secrecy over radar, the press named me 'Cat's Eyes'. However it was Stevens who was unique in being the only really successful and true 'Cat's Eyes' night fighter pilot in the whole of the RAF. It is he, and not I, who should be celebrated as such."

But just who was Richard Playne Stevens, the 'unknown' night fighter ace and the stopgap 'secret weapon'?

On a moonlit night in September 1916 the Dartford searchlights were probing to find the Zeppelin airship Schütte-Lanz II as it drifted up the Thames Estuary. Brothers James and Richard Stevens were asleep in their cottage near Gravesend when their mother called, "Boys, quick! He's coming down on fire!" James recalled, "We rushed to the bedroom window

## "HOW WE ALL CHEERED AS THE AIRSHIP SPLIT INTO TWO ANGRY RED BALLS OF FIRE AND FELL TO THE GROUND NORTH OF THE RIVER"

to watch, and then how we all cheered as the airship split into two angry red balls of fire and fell to the ground north of the river."

They had witnessed the first successful night fighter interception in history over British soil, carried out by Lieutenant William Leefe-Robinson who was later awarded the VC for his action. Twenty-five years later Richard would rise to become the RAF's greatest night fighter pilot, stalking his prey in the same patch of sky as had Leefe-Robinson.

Growing up in Kent Richard Stevens and his family spent hours on country walks, often at night. His siblings remembered that Richard was "at home in the dark" and "with the night instinct of a cat!". Not only that, but Richard became a crackshot. With his Webley air pistol, he fired at 78 rpm records suspended from a washing line, delighting at getting his pellets through the centre hole. If any missed, he would be mortified as the records shattered into black shards onto the lawn. Already Richard was developing gifts and talents which later stood him in good stead: excellent night vision and excellent marksmanship.

By 1928 an adventurous spirit led him to go farming in Australia. A young man with aspirations, he was still searching for a role in life. With few friends he was something of a loner but was becoming a more proficient shot. On horseback he carried his own personal armoury and was once teased, "It's all very



*A night fighter pilot enters his Hurricane before a sortie*

Image: Alamy

## LONE WOLF: BRITAIN'S NIGHT FIGHTER 'ACE'

well going around like Billy the Kid but you couldn't hit a haystack at five yards." With that, he whipped out his pistol and shot a rabbit from horseback at some 20 yards, cleanly and through its head. But life in Australia was becoming dull. He needed new adventures.

Now he enlisted in the Palestine Police Force where he served for some four years and his brother James recalled, "He had a distinct fellow-feeling with Jews and Arabs. His great hero was Lawrence of Arabia. His book *The Seven Pillars Of Wisdom* had a deep meaning for him. I think Richard wanted to follow in the footsteps of Lawrence."

By 1936 Richard was back in Britain where he met and married Mabel Hyde before learning to fly. Qualifying as a pilot he went on to fly commercially with Wrightways of Croydon. Here he was sometimes seen wearing Arab head dress – an echo of his fascination with T. E. Lawrence.

At Croydon Stevens was already getting a reputation for his prodigious ability to see in the dark – something which stood him in good stead on night-time flights between Croydon and Paris. Guy Ashenden flew with him at Croydon, "It was said that if you wanted to find

a really thick fog you only had to go to Croydon airport. His night sight was incredible. Not only could he see in the fog and mist, but he had the instinct of a homing pigeon."

Prior to the war Richard enlisted in the RAFVR while continuing duties with Wrightways, and when war was declared he initially flew with Wrightways on army co-operation flights. Then, in April 1940, he received his first RAF posting to Ringway Airport and 110 Anti-Aircraft Wing where he was regarded as "a very good and professional pilot who just wanted to get on with the war".

Meanwhile his wife and two children, twins John and Frances, lived in West Sussex and in a tragic accident in October 1940 a paraffin stove overturned causing a fire in which Frances died. Richard was devastated and became estranged from Mabel. Later it would be reported (incorrectly) that his wife and children had been killed in the Blitz. The loss of his beloved Frances, though, gave him incentive to get back at the enemy whom he perceived to have been at least indirectly responsible for the death of Frances. By late 1940 he was posted to an Operational Training Unit.

His instructor, Derek Dowding, recalled, "We were used to dealing with very young and

inexperienced pilots and onto this scene burst 31-year-old Stevens – vastly more experienced than any of his instructors! He was an incredibly competent bad weather pilot and we could have taught him to fly the Hurricane in a week, but the 'system' demanded he stay the full course. This contributed to his impatience. He regarded his time at Sutton Bridge as an interruption in his programme of getting to work against the Germans."

Finally, in November 1940, Richard was posted to 151 Squadron at Wittering as a night fighter pilot where, on 15/16 January 1941, he found success for the first time – his finely honed flying skills, remarkable night-vision and expert marksmanship all coming together in two actions that saw his nascence as a night fighter 'ace'.

First, over Essex, he found a Dornier 17, sending it flaming into the ground. There were no survivors. Stevens, though, momentarily blacked out from excessive 'G' in the dive from 30,000ft and over stressed his Hurricane to an extent that it was immediately grounded. Taking up another Hurricane later that night, he found further prey, sending a Heinkel 111 into the sea off Canvey Island.

**"ONCE, WHEN A BOMBER EXPLODED JUST IN FRONT OF HIM, THE BLOODY REMAINS OF AN AIRMAN WAS SPLATTERED ACROSS HIS HURRICANE. HE REFUSED TO LET HIS GROUND-CREW WASH IT OFF"**

151 Squadron pose for a group photo with one of the squadron Hurricanes in 1941



## LONE WOLF: BRITAIN'S NIGHT FIGHTER 'ACE'

Later, landing at Gravesend, Stevens strode into the dispersal hut to find exhausted Defiant pilots and gunners lounging around doing nothing. Wing Commander Cosby recalled, "Suddenly, in strode a chap wearing an Irvin jacket and flying boots. Looking around, he demanded, 'Why aren't you lot airborne?' He was told in no uncertain words of one syllable and a few expletives what he could do.

"We asked him who the hell he was, where he came from, and in what. He told us from Wittering, in a Hurricane. We told him to bloody well go back there. He said his name was Stevens. We'd never heard of him."

However, they soon would hear of him. His first 'kill' was immortalised by war artist Eric Kennington in a work called *Stevens' Rocket* and was published with a Kennington portrait of Stevens in the *London Illustrated News*.

Stevens was later admitted to hospital with a burst eardrum caused by diving from 30,000ft on his first engagement. He then wrote to his father, modestly telling him, "I resent congratulations for a job that 9/10ths of the RAF could have done as easily or better. I have two Huns to my credit and now they have added a DFC."

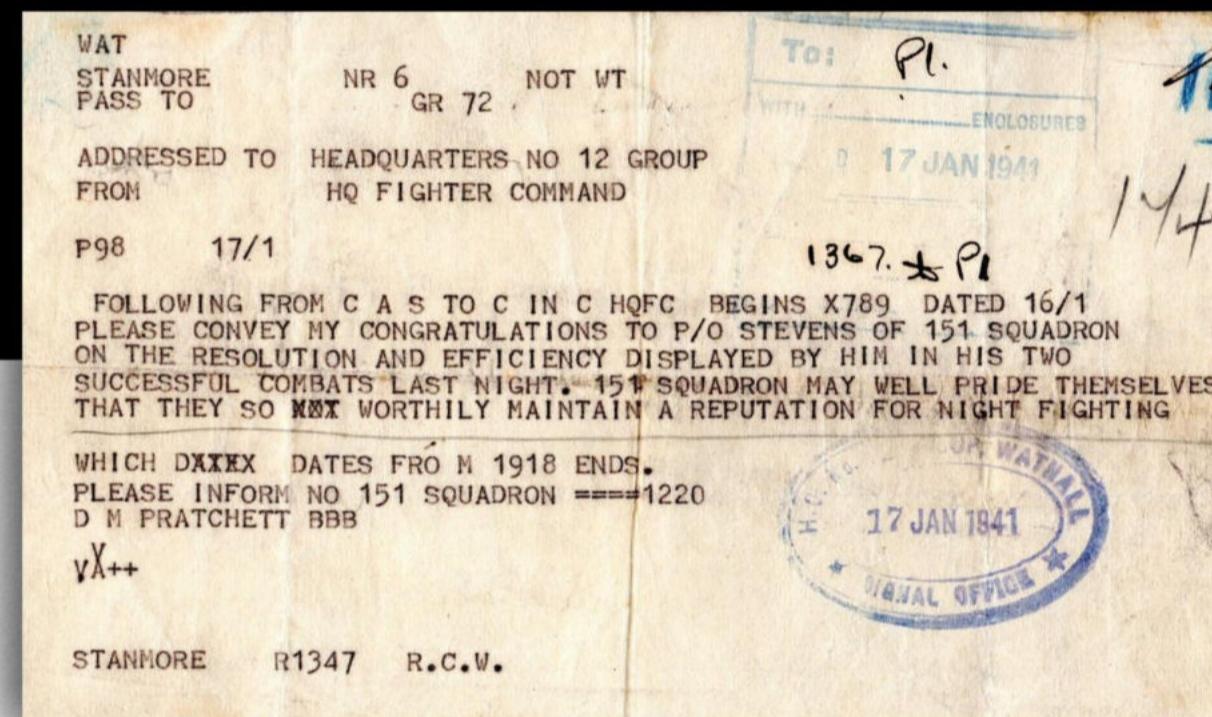
His first 'kill' after getting back on operations was a bomber seen against the moon's reflection on the sea far below. The raider stood no chance. Then, on 8 April, another victory against a Heinkel 111 saw the aircraft crashing in flames near Wellesbourne. Here history repeated itself as another young boy watched from his bedroom window as the bomber crashed to earth in flames. Two days later Stevens literally flew through the exploding debris of a Heinkel. His score was rising dramatically.

One of his victims found out what it was like on the receiving end of a Stevens attack, a traumatised Junkers 88 gunner telling his story, "We were flying slowly at under 100 feet in misty conditions and I thought we were invisible.

Suddenly, I looked up and saw the shadow of a night fighter right on top of us. I just couldn't believe it as the cockpit and

propeller slowly moved inside our tail plane. When he opened up with his cannon I thought he had collided with us because our debris was all over him, but there, quite clearly to be seen against the background glare of our burning aircraft, was a black helmeted figure, silhouetted in the open cockpit."

In a short and meteoric career Stevens became a legendary figure in RAF Fighter Command, steadily racking up his score. Newspapers lauded him as the "Cat's Eyes night fighter pilot", a senior RAF officer describing him as "The Lone Wolf" and tales of his exploits abounded. Once, when a bomber exploded just in front of him, the bloody remains of an airman was splattered across his Hurricane. He refused to let his ground-

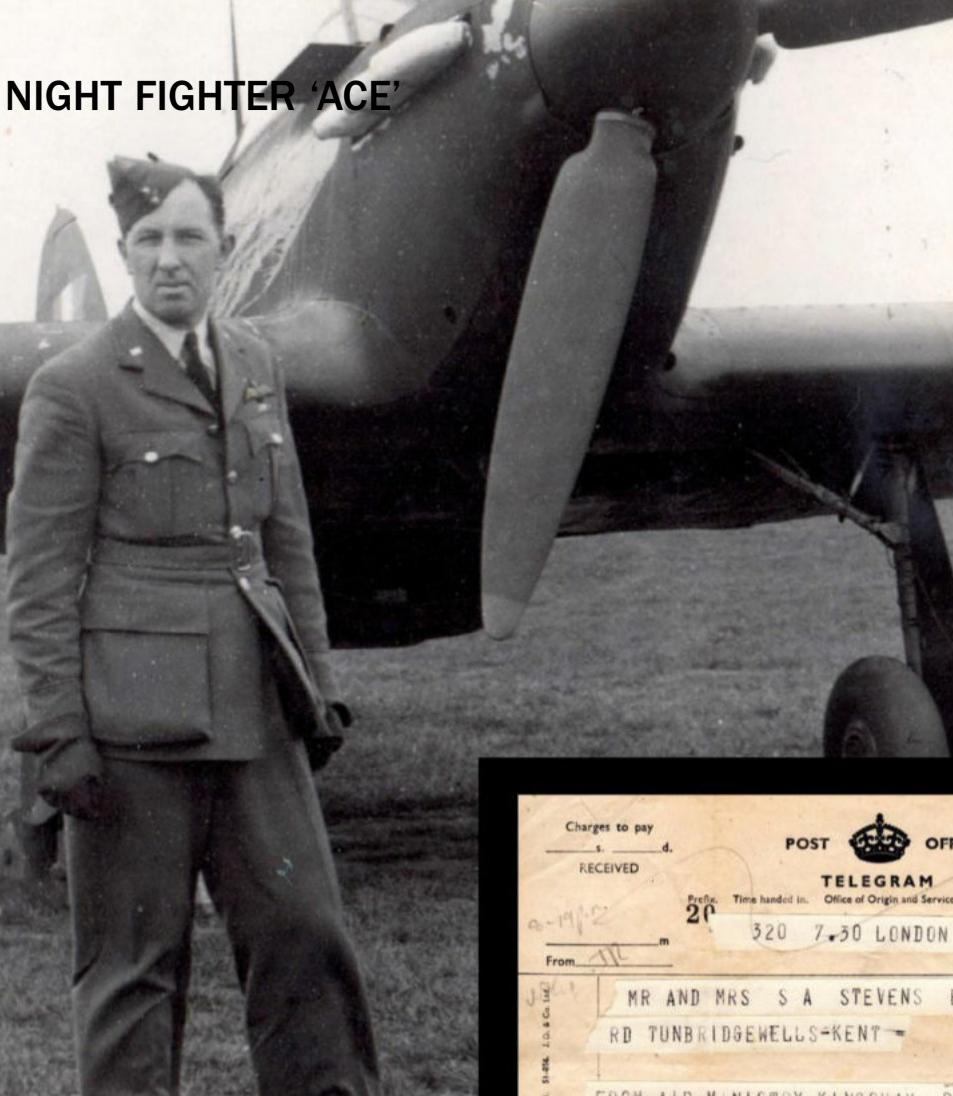


The teleprinted congratulatory message from the Chief of the Air Staff on 17 January 1941, recognising Richard Stevens' double victory

Images: Andy Saunders



## LONE WOLF: BRITAIN'S NIGHT FIGHTER 'ACE'



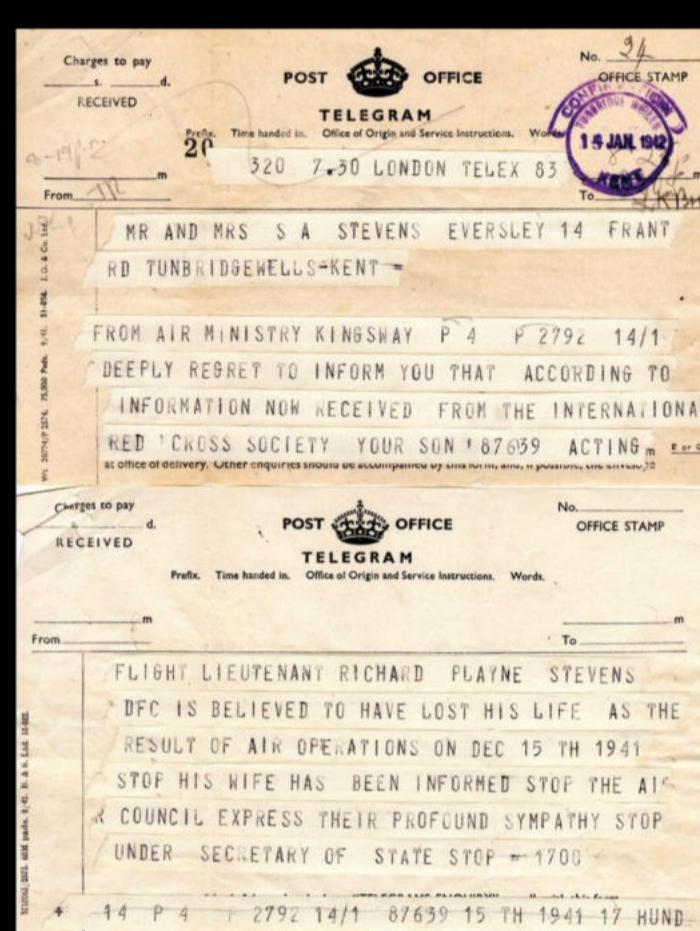
Clockwise from top left:  
Richard Stevens strikes a pose by his Hurricane.

Richard's original wartime grave marker in the Netherlands

The shattered wreckage of Richard's Hurricane

The fateful telegram of 14 January 1942, confirming Richard's death

Richard's victim on the night of 14/15 January 1941 - a Heinkel 111 downed in the sea off Canvey Island, Essex



crew wash it off. Cyril Mead, his fitter, recalled, "How he landed in the dark I don't know. The windscreen had a large hole in it. The oil tank was punctured and dented, and we found hair and bits of bone stuck to the leading edge of the port wing, the tips of the propeller blades covered in blood."

Meanwhile Stevens painted a colourful winged dragon, an RAF ensign wrapped in its tail, depicted spearing a swastika-bedeviled eagle through a layer of cloud. It was hardly subtle, but the garish artwork reflected his colourful character.

One night, told that the weather was too bad to fly, he was having none of it and took off against instructions. On another occasion the airfield was bombed and Stevens raced

to his Hurricane to get airborne only to be told he couldn't take off because the runway lights were not lit. "I don't need bloody lights," he retorted, "I'll get that bastard!"

Stevens continued to claim victories and at the

end of June 1941 sent a Junkers 88 into the waves ten miles off Happisburgh. It was victory number 12, but on nights when there were no operations, he was to be found in the Ops Room studying German aircraft to determine their weak points.

At the end of July he got number 13 by keeping the enemy silhouetted against the distant Northern Lights before the North Sea eventually closed over another Junkers 88. The squadron diary recorded victory 14, "Pilot Officer Stevens knocks down another, the clumsy devil. Why doesn't he look where he's going?!"

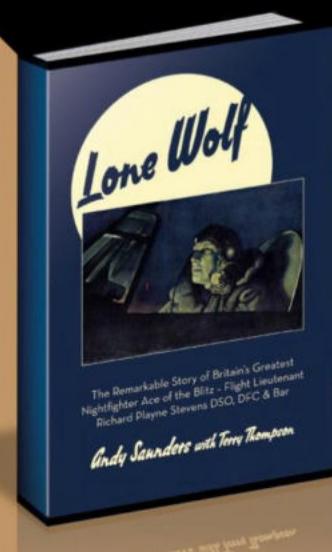
By late summer German night raids all but stopped and there were no longer bomber streams to find and where Stevens flew deliberately into anti-aircraft barrages knowing this was where the Germans would be, picking out targets with exceptional night vision and picking off raiders with consummate marksmanship. In fact just flying a Hurricane at night was challenging let alone finding and engaging the enemy. Often cockpit canopies would be left open for better visibility and this allowed exhaust carbon monoxide to be sucked into the cockpit as temperatures plummeted to sub-zero. However, with Stevens being master of machine, night sky and foe it was inevitable he would be sent over occupied enemy

territory to seek out the enemy there. It was called 'intruding'. Group Captain Tom Gleave was station commander at RAF Manston at that time, "Night intruding was in its infancy and 'Steve' was one of the pioneers. He was someone I admired tremendously. Although quiet, and very much a loner, he was imbued with a hatred of the Hun."

Eventually, in his all-black Hurricane, Stevens set out on his last operation from Manston, intruding over Gilze-Rijen airfield in the Netherlands. Joining the circuit he shot down one Junkers 88 and damaged another before his Hurricane crashed near the airfield, killing him instantly. Tom Gleave recalled, "The ops room rang through to say they heard 'Steve' calling but couldn't make out what he was saying. Then nothing more was heard from him. As the night ticked away the sad truth dawned on us all."

The bright star that had been Flt Lt Richard Stevens, DSO, DFC & Bar, had been snuffed out; the RAF's highest scoring night fighter pilot and the only one to achieve results without radar by using skill, instinct and marksmanship.

When Stevens was killed, his fame all but died with him. Writing of Stevens, H. E. Bates summed it up thus, "He is dead now – you are the living. His was the sky – yours is the Earth because of him."



Andy Saunders' new book 'Lone Wolf' is out now, published by Grub Street

Images: Andy Saunders

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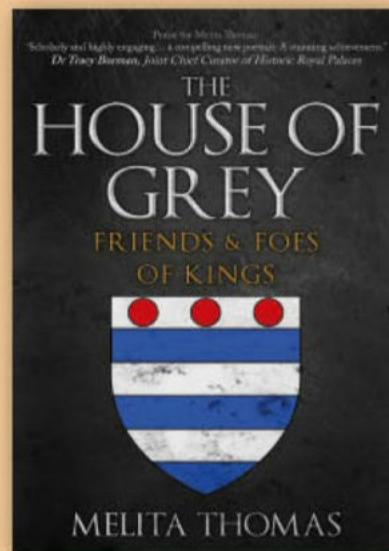
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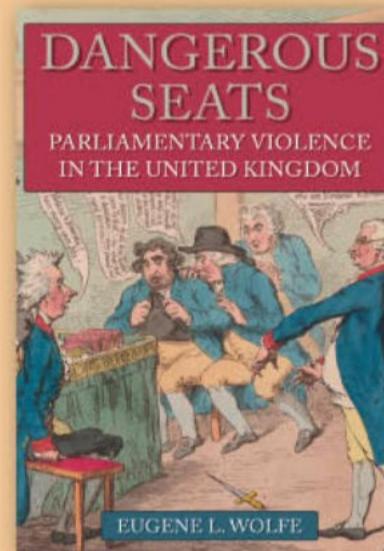
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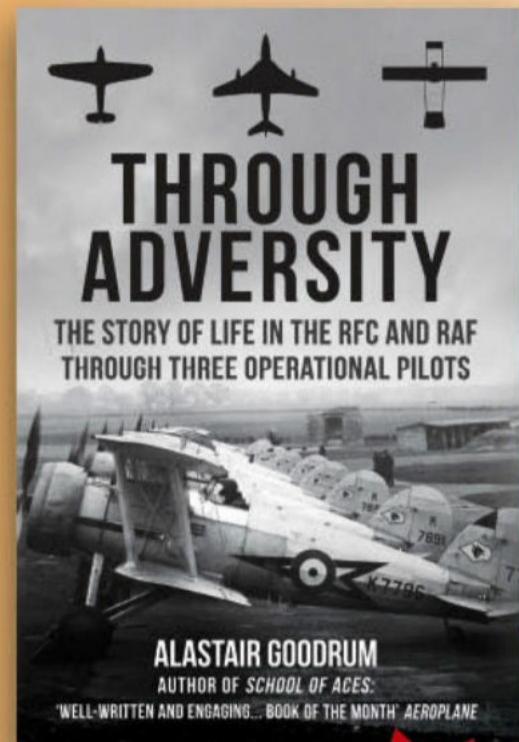
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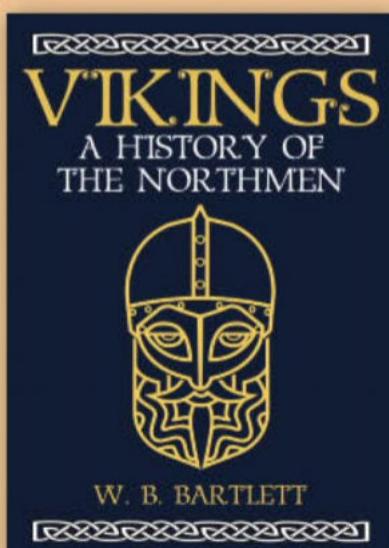
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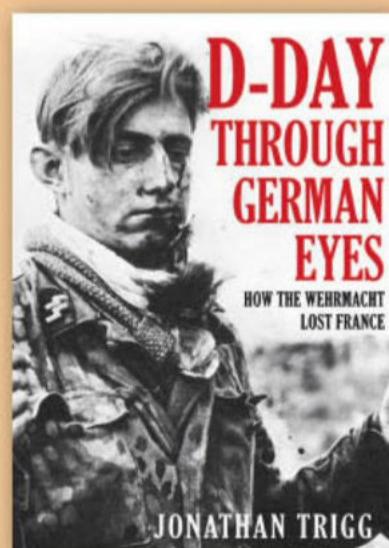
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Source: wiki/Moagim

Above: Cordoba's army makes contact with the French at Scauri, but a courageous defence of a bridge by Chevalier Bayard allowed them a safe retreat

**"HIS BOLD TACTICS DURING THE FIRST DECADE OF THE ITALIAN WARS ENABLED THE SPANISH TO PREVAIL OVER FRENCH ARMS IN A STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF SOUTHERN ITALY"**

## GONZALO FERNANDEZ DE CORDOBA

Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordoba, the Viceroy of Naples, is depicted at the Battle of Cerignola on 21 April 1503 wearing a long black cape over a full suit of plate armour with lavish gilding. Atop his head he wears a flat plumed cap. His left hand rests on the pommel of his Spanish sword.

It was while fighting against the Moors in Granada that Cordoba experimented with revolutionary tactical methods. He refined his pioneering infantry tactics in the early Italian Wars. These methods became the foundation of the Spanish tercio that would dominate European warfare for the next 140 years.



© Art Agency

girard



Source: Wiki/Paliano

# THE GRAND CAPTAIN

Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordoba reorganised the Spanish infantry to defeat the vaunted French heavy cavalry in the Italian Wars

WORDS WILLIAM E. WELSH

**M**ounted French knights thundered towards the Spanish position at Cerignola on 21 April 1503, but had to reign in their horses when they reached an unseen ditch bristling with sharpened stakes. As the French gendarmes paused dumbfounded before the ditch, Spanish arquebusiers leapt atop the earthen parapet behind the ditch and began pouring deadly fire into the armoured French horsemen. The heavy musket balls knocked many of the riders from their saddles, killing some and wounding others.

Spanish commander Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordoba had conceived the sturdy field works meant to thwart the French attack that day in the region of Apulia. His bold tactics during the first decade of the Italian Wars enabled the Spanish to prevail over French arms in a struggle for control of southern Italy.

## Promising junior officer

Gonzalo was born in 1453 in the town of Montilla in the Castilian province of Cordoba. His father, Pedro Fernandez de Córdoba, the Count of Aguilar, governed seven castles near the Granadan frontier. When Gonzalo was three years old his father died leaving his inheritance to Gonzalo's six-year-old brother, Alonso.

When Gonzalo was just 12 years old he was allowed to ride alongside his older brother when the Aguilar knights rode forth on raids against Moorish objectives on the Castilian-Granadan frontier. During this time he learned the methods of border warfare, including

sudden attacks, ambushes, and fast pursuits. Two years later he became a page in the court of Prince Alonso of Asturias, the half brother of Castilian King Enriquez IV.

In 1469 Princess Isabella of Castile wed King Ferdinand II of Aragon, thus setting the stage for the unification of Spain upon her uncle Enriquez's death in 1474. However Isabella's claim to the Castilian throne was contested by Enriquez's daughter, Joanna la Beltraneja, which touched off the four-year-long Second War of Castilian Succession in 1475.

Cordoba became a member of Isabella's court in 1476. His first experience as an officer was when he led a cavalry formation furnished to him by his brother in the final battle of the war. Serving as a lieutenant under the Master of Santiago, Cordoba commanded 120 lances at Albuera on 24 February 1479. In the desperate clash he was in the thick of the fighting participating in multiple cavalry charges.

He gained more valuable experience during the Granadan War that pitted the Castilians and Aragonese against the Moors of Grenada. During the nine-year conflict, he became skilled at using artillery and explosives to reduce Moorish strongholds.

## Independent command

Cordoba's first independent command occurred when Ferdinand and Isabella dispatched him to contest a takeover of the Kingdom of Naples by French King Charles VIII. Exercising a tenuous dynastic claim to the kingdom, Charles marched south through Italy with

25,000 troops and took possession of the city of Naples in February 1495. The kingdom encompassed southern Italy and Sicily.

The Kingdom of Naples was ruled by a House of Trastamara cousin of King Ferdinand of Spain. The only hope the Neapolitans had in throwing off the French yoke lay in receiving military assistance from Spain.

Isabella dispatched Cordoba to southern Italy with 1,500 infantry, 500 jinetes (light cavalry), and 100 heavy cavalrymen. The force landed on in late May 1495 in Reggio di Calabria.

By that time, Charles was on his way back to France. He left 12,500 troops behind to defend his newly acquired territory. Before leaving, Charles designated his kinsman, Duke Gilbert of Montpensier, as the viceroy of Naples.

Montpensier dispatched his best general, Scotsman Bernard Stewart, Seigneur d'Aubigny, to destroy Cordoba's force. The two armies collided in an open-field battle on 28 June at Seminara in which Aubigny's gendarmes and Swiss pikemen soundly defeated Cordoba's army.

In the months that followed Cordoba sent his light cavalry to harass French lines of communication while he awaited reinforcement. He soon received substantial reinforcements from Archduke Maximilian of Austria, who was a key Spanish ally.

In spring 1496 Cordoba switched over to the offensive. Cordoba defeated Montpensier at Aversa on 23 July 1496, forcing the surrender of the French army. For his victory over the French, Cordoba received the sobriquet 'El Gran Capitan'.

**"CORDOBA'S GENIUS LAY IN HIS ABILITY TO CORRECT THE SHORTCOMINGS OF HIS FORCES BY ADOPTING THE BEST TACTICAL CONCEPTS OF HIS ENEMIES"**



*Cordoba gazes upon the lifeless body of the French commander, Louis d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours, at Cerignola*

## Second Italian War

In the aftermath of the First Italian War, Cordoba overhauled the Spanish army. He reorganised his infantry by replacing the bulk of his sword-and-buckler foot soldiers with pikemen and arquebusiers. His pike and shot troops were taught to manoeuvre over rough ground, resist cavalry attacks, and deliver shock attacks.

Charles VIII died in 1498 and was succeeded by Louis XII. Louis was keen on retaining some portion of the Kingdom of Naples and therefore proposed to Ferdinand that they divide the Kingdom of Naples between themselves. Pope Alexander, who condoned the agreement, conveniently deposed the Trastamara ruler of the kingdom. A treaty signed in 1500 gave Charles the northern part of the kingdom and Ferdinand the southern part.

Ferdinand, who became dissatisfied with the arrangement, went to war in 1502 to win control of the Kingdom of Naples for Spain. The French made the first strategic move when Louis d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours, besieged Cordoba in the Apulian fortress of Barletta. After receiving a large body of reinforcements in early 1503, Cordoba seized the nearby French base at Cerignola.

Cordoba ordered his troops to widen a ditch at the base of the hilltop town. His men drove sharp stakes into the bottom of the ditch to prevent the enemy from crossing the ditch. The excavated dirt was then used to build a parapet behind the ditch.

As the French approached Cerignola, Cordoba deployed his 2,000 arquebusiers four ranks deep in the centre behind the parapet. To protect them, he placed 1,000 pikemen on each side of the arquebusiers. Any French troops near the ditch would be within the 40-metre range of the arquebusiers. Spanish guns on the hillside supported the troops behind the rampart.

## Clash at Cerignola

Even with the field works the Spanish were in for a desperate battle. Nemours's 9,000-strong army was nearly twice the size of Cordoba's army; however the various arms were not well integrated. The French right division consisted of lance-wielding heavy cavalry, the centre division was composed of mercenary Swiss pikemen, and the left division was made up of French and German crossbowmen.

Nemours attacked before his artillery had a chance to deploy. Cordoba's Spanish jinetes screened the ditch so superbly that the French had no knowledge of the existence of a ditch until their heavy cavalry reached it.

The French cavalry attack stalled at the ditch. As Nemours looked for a way through the ditch he was slain by the arquebus fire. When the surviving French gendarmes withdrew from the ditch, the Swiss pikemen attacked with all of their fury. Although they tried desperately to fight their way into the Spanish position they could not breach the field works.

As the French army began withdrawing, Cordoba launched a counterattack with his pikemen. The Spanish swept the field, inflicting 5,000 casualties on the French at the loss of a few hundred Spanish troops.

## Stalemate on the Garigliano

The remnant of Nemours's army withdrew to the safety of the citadel at Gaeta to await the arrival of a new French army. King Charles XII sent 20,000 French troops overland to Naples and gave overall command of the army to Italian Condottiero Francesco II Gonzaga, Marquess of Mantua. Meanwhile Cordoba took possession of the city of Naples on 13 May 1503.

Cordoba deployed his 12,000 troops behind the Garigliano River in October to block the anticipated French advance against Spanish-held Naples. As expected Mantua marched south only to find Cordoba's army heavily entrenched on the south bank.

After his pioneers laid a pontoon bridge over the lower Garigliano, Mantua established a tête de pont on the far bank in early November, but Cordoba bottled up the forces in the bridgehead. When Mantua was stricken with a fever command devolved to Marquis Ludovico II of Saluzzo.

A six-week stalemate followed. Troops on both sides suffered acute hardship encamped on the marshy ground during the rainy season. While Cordoba remained at the battlefield with his troops throughout this time, the



*Cordoba's Castilian troops storm the walls of Montefrio during the Granadan War*



*Seigneur de Bayard attempts to singlehandedly hold back the Spanish in a romantic depiction of the Battle of Garigliano*

high-ranking French commanders billeted themselves in comfortable quarters in nearby towns. Believing the Spanish would remain on the defensive the French did not keep a close watch on the Spanish.

### Flank attack

Spanish ally Condottiero Bartolomeo d'Alviano reinforced Cordoba's army with 5,400 troops in mid-December. In preparation for a surprise attack on the French army Cordoba instructed his chief engineer, Pedro Navarro, to construct a pontoon bridge that could be deployed in a matter of hours when needed.

In a driving rain in the pre-dawn darkness of 29 December Navarro's pioneers laid the bridge on a narrow portion of the swollen river opposite the extreme left flank of the French army.

For the surprise attack Cordoba had organised his army into three divisions. Alviano led the vanguard, Cordoba led the centre division, and Fernando Andrada commanded the rearguard. Alviano's Italian troops streamed across the bridge at dawn while the French and Swiss foot soldiers were fast asleep in their huts. His light cavalry swept past the disorganised French infantry and turned east to secure the village of Castleforte to prevent the French from using it as a strongpoint. Believing the day was lost the troops on the French left streamed north towards Gaeta.

Cordoba then led his mounted Spanish men-at-arms and pikemen across the pontoon bridge

to the north bank. He caught the French centre in the flank and dislodged it from the river line. At that point Saluzzo ordered a general retreat to Gaeta. A heroic French nobleman, Pierre Terrail, Seigneur de Bayard, began rallying the retreating French at a defile between the mountains and the sea near the village of Formia.

Meanwhile Andrada crossed the French bridge on the lower Garigliano and captured most of the French artillery since the French gendarmes had fled north to Formia.

Up to that point there had only been light fighting, but the two sides became locked in furious combat for an hour at the defile. When Andrada's troops arrived to reinforce the Spanish forces already engaged at Formia, it proved too much for the French. Those French soldiers who had not been taken prisoner proceeded west to Gaeta.

### Viceroy of Naples

On 1 January 1504 the French capitulated. Cordoba freed his French prisoners on the condition that they return home by sea. At the end of the month, Charles XII and Ferdinand of Aragon signed the Treaty of Lyon by which Charles ceded the Kingdom of Naples to Spain. In appreciation for the military achievement of defeating the French, King Ferdinand made Cordoba the Viceroy of Naples.

Isabella, who had always championed Cordoba, died in November 1504. Ferdinand, who grew jealous of Cordoba's reputation

recalled him to Spain in 1507. He was called out of retirement in 1512 to command the Spanish forces in Italy after a major reverse at the hands of the French at Ravenna during the War of the League of Cambrai. Three years later, at the age of 62, he returned to Spain stricken with malaria. He died at Granada on 1 December 1515.

Cordoba's genius lay in his ability to correct the shortcomings of his forces by adopting the best tactical concepts of his enemies. He readily embraced the greater use of firearms in the belief that they would transform infantry tactics. In this he was correct, for his initial integration of shot and pike troops laid the foundation for the Spanish tercios. From a geopolitical standpoint his decisive victories in the First and Second Italian Wars enabled Spain to control Sicily and southern Italy for two centuries.



### FURTHER READING

- ★ HALL, BERT S. *WEAPONS AND WARFARE IN RENAISSANCE EUROPE* (BALTIMORE, MARYLAND: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1997)
- ★ KEEGAN, JOHN, AND ANDREW WHEATCROFT, *WHO'S WHO IN MILITARY HISTORY FROM 1453 TO THE PRESENT DAY* (LONDON: ROUTLEDGE, 1996)
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# "TOUGH AS HELL"



British veteran Neville Williams spent an explosive year fighting on the front line of the Korean War as a conscripted National Serviceman

WORDS TOM GARNER

*Neville Williams pictured in a studio photograph after six weeks' training. He had recently been promoted to lance-corporal*

Image: Getty

*US Marines dive for cover in a bunker as an 82mm shell explodes, 11 April 1952*

Over 90,000 members of the British Armed Forces served in the Korean War between 1950-53. It was the largest commitment of soldiers in a conflict since WWII and with casualties of 1,078 killed and 2,674 wounded it remains Britain's deadliest post-war conflict. A huge number of these troops were conscripted National Servicemen who may not have volunteered but nevertheless fought in a bitter conflict that cost the lives of possibly five million people.

One of those conscripts was Neville Williams. A civilian engineer serving in the Welch Regiment, Williams fought in Korea between November 1951 and November 1952 with the majority of his time being spent on front line on various positions along the 38th Parallel. During this period he survived an extremely cold winter, endless enemy bombardments and fighting conditions that were reminiscent of WWI.

#### **"Doing something different"**

Born in 1930 Williams was able to defer his National Service until he completed an apprenticeship in engineering. Although he was

eventually called up on his 21st birthday on 5 January 1951 he pragmatically viewed his conscription as an opportunity, "I grew up in an age that was a bit more matter-of-fact and you tended to accept things in life. National Service was no big problem for me and I just looked at it as a couple of years doing something different. In a way, I quite looked forward to it."

A keen sportsman, Williams wanted to be a physical training instructor and initially joined the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, which had been his father's regiment during WWI.

In the event he was transferred to the Welch Regiment to boost its strength, "We didn't know then but they were making the numbers up for Korea in the Welsh Brigade. I realised something was happening because we went into battle training pretty quickly."

Williams was swiftly promoted to lance-corporal, "National Servicemen came from all walks of life but I'd also studied at night school for a National Certificate. I was probably a borderline case to be an officer but in those days they only came from the higher classes. However if you work in high-class engineering you've got to use your brain and make big

decisions. In that sense the army was very shrewd at psychologically sizing you up."

Compared to other conscripts Williams found training to be comparatively easy, "The physical training was not very difficult because I was very fit. We went on a four-mile run once and I caught up the people who were laying the courses!"

Nevertheless conditions could be gruelling for the green soldiers, "There was a place called Cwm Gwdi in the Brecon Beacons and we went to practice marksmanship in freezing weather. Your hands would get so cold that you weren't likely to hit anything. At one point we were left in a deserted hut that had no lights.

"One guy called Jones went out and came back in the dark. There was all this scurrying because he'd pinched a few loaves of dry bread. He was a hero for that!"

While completing his training in Norfolk, the recruits were informed of their deployment for active service, "We realised we were being trained for either Malaya or Korea but we weren't sure. The CO eventually called a meeting because a local newspaper had said we were going to Korea. He said, 'There's a rumour that the battalion's going to Korea – I'm

**"IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF 12 MONTHS OF ALMOST  
RELENTLESS SERVICE ON THE FRONT LINE OF A WAR  
THAT HAD GROWN INTO A STALEMATE"**



## "TOUGH AS HELL"

*British soldiers walk through a desolate Korean landscape*



*Image: Mary Evans*

happy to say that it's true!" Nobody was really happy about it but that was it."

The National Servicemen knew little about the country they were to be sent to, "Korea was so far away and you had to look on a map to see where it was. It didn't mean a thing to us; we knew next to nothing about the war and had no experience of conflict. We had really serious training but nothing can really prepare you."

### **"I won't be coming back"**

The newly trained soldiers of 1st Battalion, Welch Regiment embarked from Southampton for a 12,000-mile journey to Korea. During the long voyage, one of Williams's friends – Corporal Oram – confided in him, "He was a regular who taught me boxing. We were really good pals but as we were crossing the China Sea he leaned over the side of the boat and said to me, 'I won't be coming back.' He'd seen action before and there was an inevitability about the way he said it. After we landed he got a direct hit in an observation post and was one of the first of us to be killed in Korea."

Landing at Pusan on 10 November 1951 Williams immediately encountered desperate poverty, "You could smell Pusan a mile off because there was a shanty town and it was very run down. They had a massive problem with orphans and children were trying to clean your shoes. Ever since then I've always given money to Save the Children because to see children like that was awful."

After disembarkation the Welch Regiment travelled by rail to Seoul through a landscape

that consisted of "miles of little villages where the buildings were made out of wattle and daub – they were virtually straw huts". The South Korean capital was "no better than Pusan" and from there the battalion crossed the 38th Parallel into what Williams describes as "wild country". It was the beginning of 12 months of almost relentless service on the front line of a war that had ground into a stalemate.

### **Pioneer Hill**

Williams had been posted to the uplands that overlooked the Samichon River with 1st Battalion occupying a position nicknamed 'Pioneer Hill', "It was about 500 feet high and we were in a bunker right on the very top, although it was only a big hole when we got there. We put a roof over it as well as logs after a while. The Samichon River ran right through us to the enemy Chinese positions, which were right across the valley."

As one of the regimental signallers Williams had an important communications role, "I had to set up a telephone exchange with lines to all the different companies. My line to HQ was one of the main lines so I could often listen in. You shouldn't have but you could easily eavesdrop."

In this role Williams was attached to the Assault Pioneer Platoon, a frontline squad of crack troops, "They were the most clued up people in the battalion who would go out and blow up unexploded bombs and bunkers. They'd go out into enemy lines and could act as a rifle platoon at night. They could do anything and were good lads to have around."

The Assault Pioneers were the leading company platoon and Williams had the vital job of fixing telephone lines, "If they got blown apart, you'd have to go out. The lines had to be mended 24 hours a day, including the middle of the night. These repairs could take you out almost a couple of miles to the artillery, for example. It was all in the undergrowth and you'd have to keep pulling on the wires. Each company was supposed to mend their own lines but it didn't always happen that way. You'd also have to climb over barbed wire fences sometimes, which was not funny in the dark!"

Having arrived at the start of the Korean winter, repairing lines could be taxing, "I remember going out with three others and it was freezing cold.

"When we found the break our hands were so cold that we had to take it in turns. You could only work on it for a minute or so even though you had all your kit on.

"All you were doing was pairing the wires, tightening the knot and putting a bit of tape around it. However it was hopeless because you could only work for a few seconds. You'd have to put your hands under your armpits to get them warm again."

The low temperatures were a significant shock, "The cold was one of your biggest enemies. Your feet would freeze to the ground if you stood for a few minutes and your tea could also freeze if you didn't drink it quick enough. We had plenty of food and everyone put at least a stone on in weight because that was the main way to keep warm."



Williams (left) and his friends Jim Sibeon and Jim Lamacraft during training in Norfolk, May 1951

The cold was so bitter that it could have potentially fatal consequences, "You could easily die of it. Sometimes, you'd be standing up and your knees would collapse because you'd gone to sleep. We had a drill where you'd go to the command bunker after you'd come off guard to make sure there were no signs of frostbite. Beyond a certain point you wouldn't feel anything because it was a strange, dry cold in Korea."

#### "A formidable enemy"

During this time, the battalion received an unexpected gift from the Chinese in No-Man's-Land, "On Christmas Day we saw a tree with things on it. The Assault Pioneers went out to check that it wasn't booby-trapped and came back with actual presents!"

The presents were unusual, "There were handkerchiefs with slogans like 'Demand Peace, Stop War' and passes where you could give yourself up. I carried one of these passes in my top pocket. I used to joke with the lads that if they got captured it wouldn't be good but I would have no trouble!" This reminder of the 1914 Christmas Truce was not the only similarity to the previous conflict. Conditions on the front line were, "very much like WWI in terms of trenches, bunkers and a No-Man's-Land. There was a lot of patrol work and every patrol had to go through us as the leading platoon. They would probe into the Chinese lines and they would do it back. One night one of the lads came out and saw a Chinese [soldier] sitting by his bunker! There was a call



1st Battalion, Welch Regiment marching into Colchester after a 60-mile trek from Norfolk. They are led by the regimental goat



Williams outside 1st Battalion's command bunker at Hill 355. A loudspeaker is attached to the roof to relay music to the soldiers



"TOUGH AS HELL"

# "A GREAT LEVELLER"

BRITISH NATIONAL SERVICEMEN WERE CALLED UP IN THEIR MILLIONS DURING THE POST-WAR PERIOD TO SERVE IN CONFLICTS ACROSS THE WORLD

Introduced by the National Service Act of 1948, more than two million men were conscripted into the British Armed Forces between 1949-63. Although conscripts initially served for 18 months, this was increased to two years during the Korean War. National Service was deemed necessary to meet the demands of the Cold War, the maintenance of the diminishing British Empire and the occupations of post-war Germany and Japan.

Thousands of National Servicemen saw action, not just in Korea but also Malaya, Borneo, Suez and Cyprus among other places. Like conscription during the World Wars, these civilian soldiers came from all walks of life as Williams explains, "You had people of every ability and trade. We had a bloke who was a conjuror and he was really good because that's how he earned his living. The next bloke worked in a shoe shop so it was a real mixture."

Williams noticed that this variety was nevertheless balanced out by the rigours of military life, "You had some people who had perhaps led sheltered lives who found they were far better than they thought they were. Equally you had others who thought they were the cat's whiskers but when it came to doing some things they weren't very clever at all. Because the army was both practical and theoretical, it acted as a great leveller."

The National Service Memorial at Alrewas, Staffordshire. 395 British National Servicemen were killed on active service between 1947-63



Williams (second row down, first left) and his fellow Welch Regiment National Servicemen pictured after their passing-out parade following initial training



Image: Pen & Sword and Neville Williams

## "TOUGH AS HELL"

to 'Stand To' but the [soldier] disappeared although you could see his footprints."

Williams considered the Chinese to be a determined foe, "They were as tough as hell. During the winter we dropped two 500-pound bombs on a hill between us and the enemy. It used to be occupied by us but the Chinese would sneak onto it at night. They were digging in to be there permanently so they had to come off. One morning, every gun in the battalion was trained on it and when the 500-pound bombs fell the air was full of screaming metal. The top of the hill was literally blown off but the Chinese were still there the next day. They were a formidable enemy."

By contrast the battalion was ably served by Korean 'porters' who taught the British survival skills, "They sort of acted as batmen but mainly did labouring jobs for us like digging, cooking etc. However they did it so skilfully that they taught us a lot. They were country folk and when it came to things like cutting down trees or digging they were invaluable."

The porters also became good friends, "They were lovely, proud people and there was no edge or pretence about them. Kim and Chang were two of the main ones I knew although there were others. I had the highest respect for them."



Williams (far left) pictured with the battalion's valued Korean porters including his friends Chang (foreground, left) and Kim (foreground, right)

### A grim reserve

During Williams's time at Pioneer Hill he initially worked 24-hour shifts with only five hours off. For him, and the other conscripted soldiers, the reality of conflict took time to get used to, "War is a thoroughly nasty business that you hope you never get involved in. If you do, it's about survival. You can do all the battle training you like but it's not the same as the real thing. When you've got shells going off all around you, you can't learn something like that from a book. You don't need to be told to get your head down."

A major factor of surviving was trust and learning to adjust, "It's all about adapting because you're living in very strange conditions. War brings home the extremes of life and you see things in black and white. You certainly got to know the people you could rely on and that was a really big thing because you got to know who to ask if you needed something. Ultimately you did your best to look after yourself and your mates."

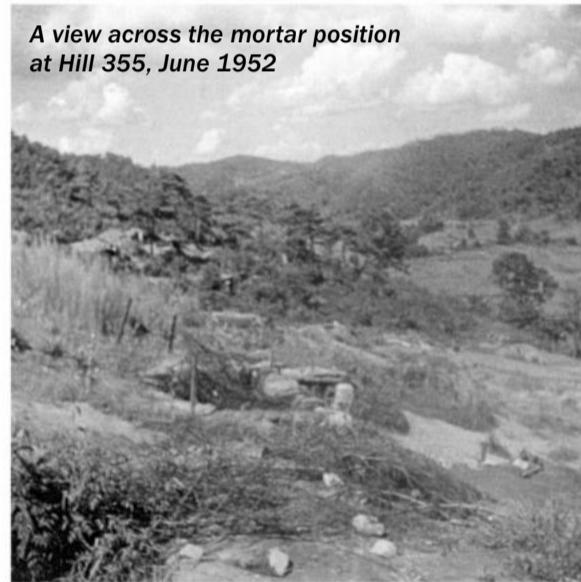
1st Battalion left Pioneer Hill in February 1952 to go in reserve and the easing of tension produced unexpected symptoms, "Several lads came up to me with the shakes because they'd

been through the winter doing patrols with hardly any sleep. Once they got to a place where they'd got nothing to worry about for a while it all caught up with them."

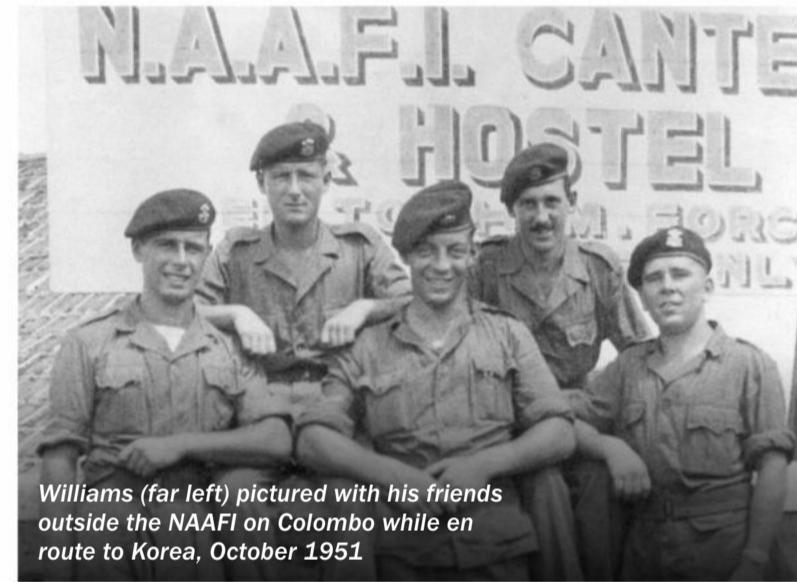
The period in reserve proved to be anything but relaxing when the soldiers moved to a new position behind the lines, "When we moved in we found it must have been a battleground because we kept finding dead bodies. They were thrown into a lime pit."

While constructing a new bunker Williams and some of his men had to make a grisly decision, "We were halfway through digging when we discovered that there was a body beneath us. We hadn't time to dig another bunker so we planked over the body and proceeded to live above it. When you walked into the bunker the planks sprang a bit and we used to say 'sorry Arthur' to the body. It was irreverent and you would never think of doing such a thing in

### "WAR BRINGS HOME THE EXTREMES OF LIFE AND YOU SEE THINGS IN BLACK AND WHITE"



A view across the mortar position at Hill 355, June 1952



Williams (far left) pictured with his friends outside the NAAFI on Colombo while en route to Korea, October 1951



Major General James Cassels, the commander of the 1st Commonwealth Division, took this picture of one man from each battalion under his command. As well as Williams (second left) and other British troops there are also Indian, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand soldiers represented

peacetime. However we saw him as one of us. We didn't know his nationality but he could have been anybody's son. It's not as cruel as it sounds but it wasn't natural either. It wasn't normal life."

Living in such terrible conditions could have dehumanising effects, "We came across a body of a man who had taken a direct hit by napalm. He was spread-eagled as though he'd been crucified and looked like a burned, charred cross. We went to have a look at him and one of the lads started kicking the body. I had to say, 'Pack it in!' because although I didn't normally pull rank, he shouldn't have done it."

The soldier was ashamed but Williams recognised that the incident was indicative of the conflict's extreme environments, "He knew he was wrong when I told him to stop and he wouldn't normally have dreamed of doing it.

"One of the problems of war is that it takes the extraordinary and turns it into ordinary circumstances. They're once in a lifetime situations and nobody can be sure what they would do or how they might be affected.

"You certainly can't rationalise or practice for things like that.

### Hill 355

When the battalion returned to the front line in April 1952 they were sent to Hill 355. The highest point on the front and the scene of major engagements, 355 had been one of the key locations of the First Battle of Maryang-San, which saw 320 United Nations troops defeat a Chinese force of approximately 1,200 soldiers in October 1951.

When the Welch Regiment arrived they took over from American soldiers, "There were dead bodies on the wire and they had to be taken off because of the smell. I wasn't terribly impressed with the Americans. I liked them as people but not their idea of soldiering. It took about three or four days to do the changeover and they weren't as disciplined as us. Where we would dig pits to tip waste food and set fire to it, they weren't so fussy. We were left with loads of rats, which took a while to get rid of."

Williams also witnessed racial discrimination within the US Army, "The white soldiers really looked down on the black soldiers. There was a black fellah who liked us because we treated him the same as ourselves. However you could tell that the Yanks treated him as though he was inferior. You could cut the tension with a knife."

Once the Americans departed, the British guarded a chaotic position, "355 was frequently bombarded and there were a lot of patrols. It was a leading place in the line and got splattered with all kinds of fire. We used to regularly dig trenches around the site so if you were caught napping under harassing fire there would probably be a slit trench nearby. The observation post would pin down the enemy but they'd equally work out where you were so it was a bit tit-for-tat."

Williams was now attached to the three-inch mortar platoon, which engaged in artillery duels with their Chinese counterparts, "You got to recognise the sounds of shelling. You knew when they would land in paddy fields and when they were close there was a buzz. If they were very close you could feel the air pressure before a 'WHOOOMPH!' and you'd dive to the floor."

### May Day bombardment

On 1 May 1952, Williams endured one of his worst experiences of enemy fire when the Chinese launched a bombardment to coincide with their celebration of the communist International Workers' Day, "It went quiet for about a week before May Day and we were

American soldiers fire mortars west of Chorwon, 7 February 1953.  
Artillery duels were a common feature of static fighting



## "TOUGH AS HELL"

wondering what was going on. We never thought it was a symbolic day for the Chinese but when the day came they opened up with everything. The air was full of metal and shells were coming down all around us. You had to just wait for the bombardment to stop and keep your head down."

The mortar platoon was positioned at the bottom of the back side of 355 with communication lines going up to all the companies on the hill. The bombardment destroyed the lines and the signallers ventured out to repair them under heavy fire, "It was a right old slog. The hill was about 1,000 feet high and we had to go up the back. The shells landed all around you making a 'BOOM' sound and we thought, 'This is no good.' I then heard a 'ZIP' and dived to the floor. I had come close to copping it by a big lump of shrapnel that had landed a few inches in front of me."

After this close shave the signallers abandoned their repairs, "We thought 'sod this!' and ran hell for leather until we got to the top of the hill. I knew some of my mates were there so we went to their bunker and sat inside for about an hour."

Exposed on the top of the hill there was little choice but to make the best of a bad situation, "Every time a shell landed a bit of soil would come down from the ceiling. We joked to ease the tension because they were constantly plastering us with mortar and shell fire that went over the top of us or landed nearby. However one of the lads in there was suffering from shell shock and shaking like a leaf. By about 4.00pm the firing stopped and we went hell for leather back to where we'd come from."

Williams had great sympathy for those who were mentally suffering under the bombardment, "I'd previously worked with an old guy who had had shell shock so I knew what it looked like and this lad was showing all the signs. It's not cowardice, it's just a case of how much people can take and nobody knows until they get involved."

### Taking prisoners

Despite the constant shelling by the Chinese, Williams did not physically encounter the enemy until he was called to arrest a captured patrol at Hill 355. Leading six armed men Williams was faced with a tense standoff, "It was hard to tell whether they were North Koreans or Chinese because they were dressed like North Koreans. They had rifles and grenades and were arguing with our chap on a light machine-gun."

Williams ordered his squad to cock their rifles and before the prisoners were escorted behind the lines he told the machine-gunner, "If it looks as though they're going to start something, shoot the leader." They weren't sure whether to start fighting or not but I think they realised they had been outgunned. When I said 'go' they all moved pretty quick."

The prisoners were marched to battalion headquarters in single file before Williams handed them over, "I subsequently heard that something had gone wrong for them and that they'd been sent out on a daylight suicide job. An intelligence officer later got a lot of information out of them but he didn't know who arrested them. Apparently I could have got a Mention in Dispatches if they'd known it was me."

# CARTOONS FROM KOREA

WILLIAMS DREW HUMOROUS SKETCHES OF LIFE ON THE FRONT LINE THAT NEVERTHELESS DEPICTED THE DANGERS AND FRUSTRATIONS OF STATIC WARFARE

War cartoons have a distinguished history in the British Army. During WWI Bruce Bairnsfather delighted his fellow troops with his satirical depictions of life in the trenches for the *Bystander* magazine, particularly the curmudgeonly soldier 'Old Bill'. Similarly the renowned Carl Giles became war correspondent cartoonist for the *Daily Express* in 1945 and followed the British 2nd Army through Western Europe.

Recreational drawing was, of course, not just confined to professionals and during the Korean War Williams made sketches that portrayed life on the front line. He sketched a variety of scenes from hills and bombardments to the interior of bunkers and mortar positions. His war cartoons have elements of humour but they are largely realistic recreations of the Welch Regiment in combat. After the war Williams went on to illustrate health and safety manuals and a pictorial guide to Chester.



### THE COMMAND BUNKER

This is the interior of the regimental command bunker at Pioneer Hill in early 1952. It was the 1st Battalion's main communications hub and Williams's main base of operations. The scene shows a signaller hard at work, water dripping through the wooden roof into a pan and a soldier bringing in a hot drink.



## SHELLFIRE

Williams depicts an incident where he and two others dived for cover from an enemy shell while they were doing some wiring work in a mortar bay. The shell landed and detonated on the bay's protective rocks before it could penetrate further.



## KOWANG-SAN

This is a view of Kowang-San, the Korean name for what the UN soldiers called Hill 355 and Little Gibraltar by British troops. In the middle distance are three-inch mortars firing in the bottom of the valley.



## FRONT LINE LIFE

This sketch shows a typical arrangement of bunkers, trenches and other items at a British mortar position. Depictions include: a three-inch mortar bay (A), a blasted tree with washing on it (B), a cast iron heated washing bowl (J), a soldier in monsoon kit (M), a bogged-down vehicle (O) and a urinal (R).

**"TOUGH AS HELL"**

Image: Getty

Chinese and North Korean soldiers celebrate the defeat of an attack by US forces. Williams describes the enemy as extremely resilient



## Tokyo and home

Although he served in Korea for a whole year Williams only had a few days leave, which he spent in Tokyo in June 1952. By now he was so acclimatised to combat that he wanted to return to the front, "We enjoyed Japan up to a point in that you could walk the streets, get a good night's sleep and have meals etc. However the funny thing was that you almost felt glad to get back to the lads. When you're on active service and then taken into a normal situation, you're not all that struck. The thinking was, 'If we have to go back, let's get back and get it finished.'"

Williams returned to Hill 355 for a time before going into another dangerous period in reserve. His active service finally finished in November 1952 where he poignantly said farewell to the Korean porters, "There were about 10-12 waiting in a tent and I knew almost all of them. Their heads were down because they knew they would have to teach the new troops everything from scratch after being friends with us. I gave Kim my winter boots, which were highly prized, and he simply said, 'You OK, Corporal Nev.' It was terrible what those fellahs went through."

Boarding the ship home was, "a hell of a relief but we never felt completely comfortable until we were a few hundred miles away. We thought that if something big blew up in Korea then they'd

probably drag us back." Once Williams had returned to Britain he suddenly appreciated minor things, "It was an amazing feeling because it was a real treat just to walk down a street with lights on. We had lived in the wild for 12 months and you didn't realise how much you'd adapted."

### A vital clash

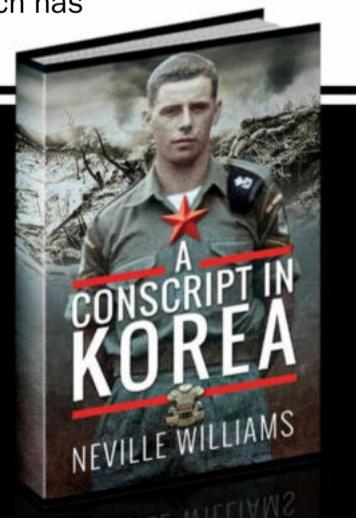
For a conflict that has been 'forgotten', Williams is in no doubt about the Korean War's importance, "It was a vital clash. The communists thought they could create a new world order and if they had taken South Korea then they could have menaced Japan, Australia, New Zealand etc. They really meant business and that's why the Americans and UN threw in as much as they could to stop them. I think it's been the most important conflict since WWII."

The most direct result of the UN intervention was that South Korea evaded communist rule and is now a democratic country with a thriving economy. Williams himself was personally thanked for this outcome in 2000 while holidaying with his wife in Switzerland, "We had caught a train and met a South Korean couple. While we were chatting I said, 'I was in your country in 1951.' The man almost looked startled and asked if I was in the war. When I told him I had he jumped up and shook my hand. He said, 'I wouldn't have had an

education if the communists had got down. I've had a good life and own a business. It's been wonderful to what it was previously like in Korea.' It inspired me to write my book *A Conscript In Korea*, which was later published."

Despite the hardship of the war Williams believes that his experiences in Korea positively shaped his outlook on life, "In the long run Korea was a good experience because it made me push myself beyond what I thought I could do. If I could do that for £2 a week and survive then I could do anything. For example, when I attended night school shortly afterwards it wasn't a drudge but a pleasure because it all seemed a privilege. It gave me a true perspective, which has lasted ever since."

Neville Williams is the author of the war memoir *A Conscript In Korea*, which is published by Pen & Sword Books. To purchase a copy visit: [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk)

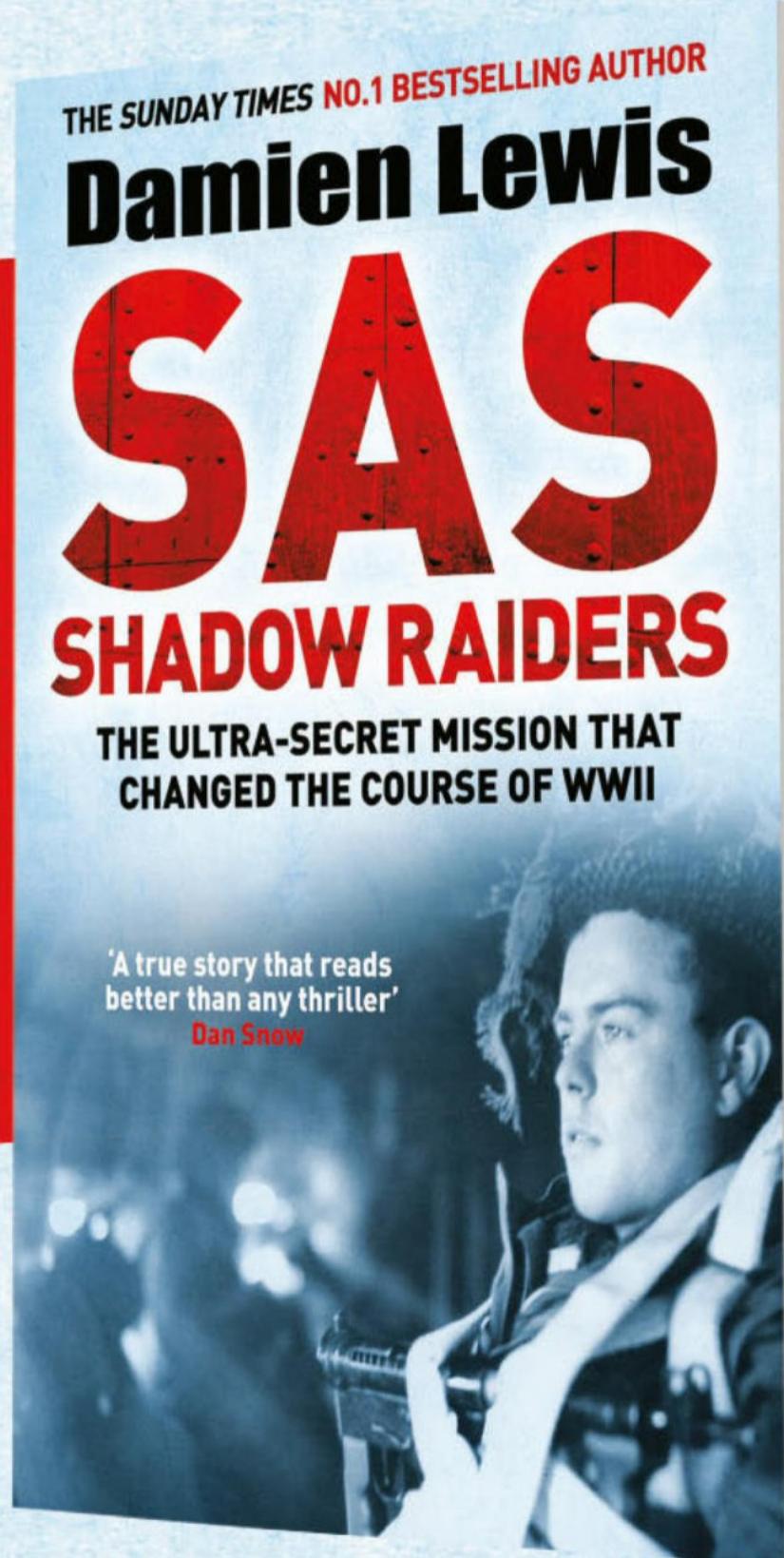


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## Heroes of the Victoria Cross

# EDWARD COURTNEY BOYLE

Executing one of the most daring naval raids of the First World War, Lieutenant-Commander Edward Boyle ran the perilous gauntlet of the Dardenelles and sank a series of Ottoman ships

WORDS MARK SIMNER

A native of Carlisle Edward Courtney Boyle was already an experienced sailor by the outbreak of the First World War. He had entered HMS Britannia in 1897 becoming a midshipman the following year. A keen sportsman Boyle was particularly noted for his skills as a competitive rugby player. He was also an early member of the Royal Navy's Submarine Service when, in July 1904, he was sent to join the submarine depot ship HMS

Thames in order to receive instruction as a sub-lieutenant. Within five months, Boyle was promoted to lieutenant and given command of a Holland boat (an early type of submarine), at the tender age of 21.

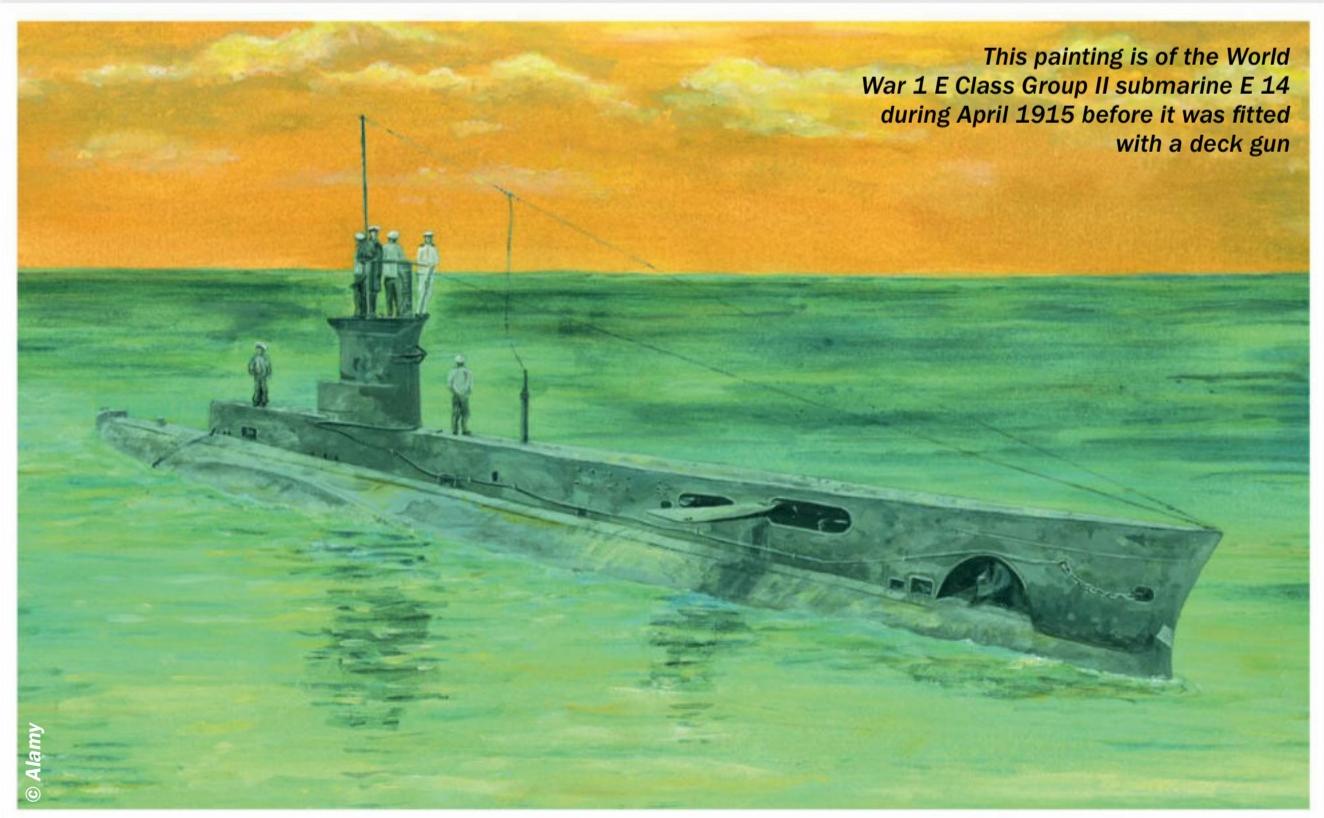
A series of appointments followed, the first to the depot ship HMS Mercury in September 1906, then back to Thames to command the submarine C4 in October the following year. A stint with the surface fleet came next, Boyle serving aboard the battleship HMS Ocean from

November 1908 until January 1910. He then went back to the submarine service, being posted to the depot ship HMS Vulcan in March, taking command of C29. In November 1911 he arrived at the depot ship HMS Bonventure to take command of D2.

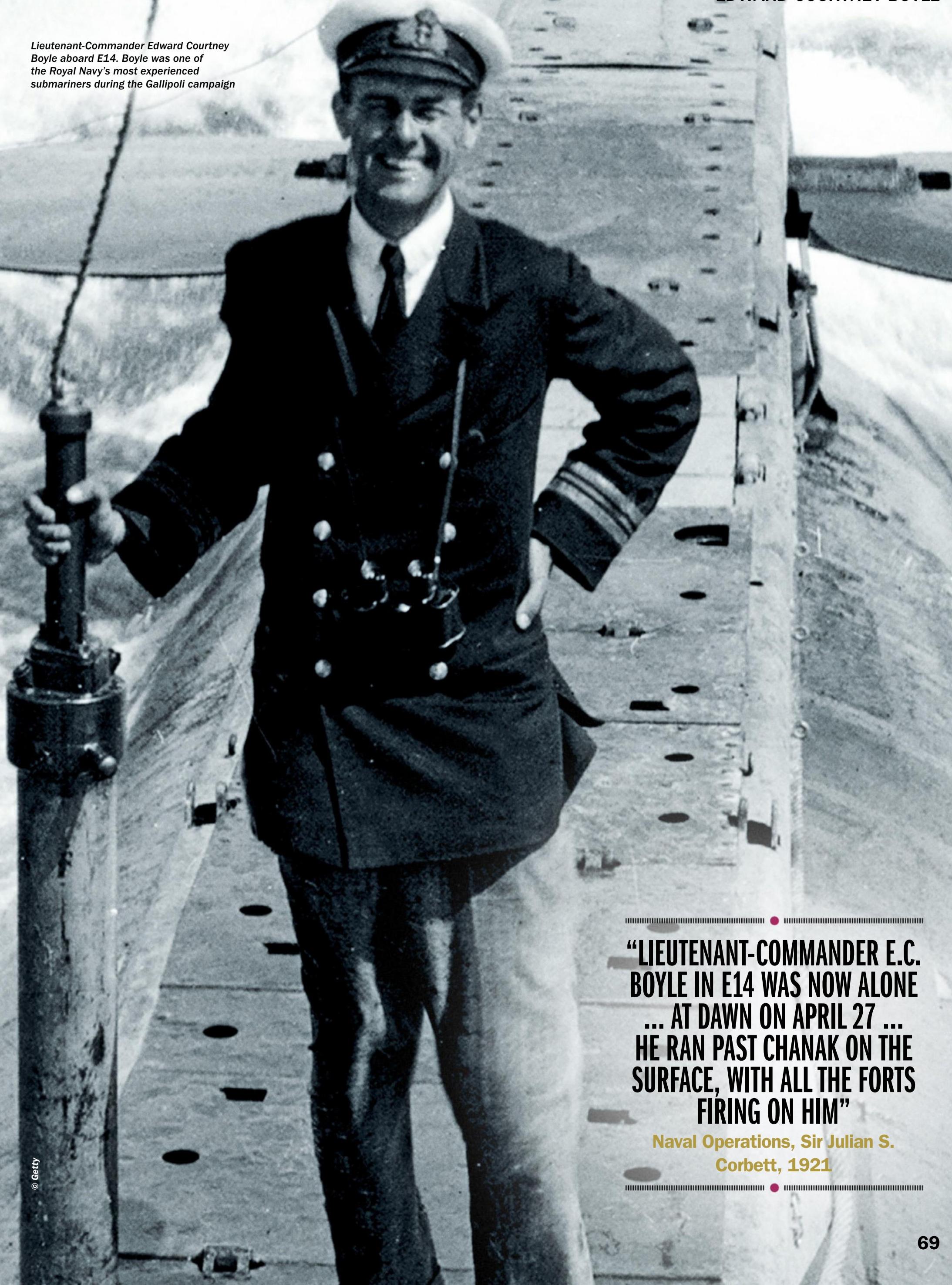
Thus Boyle was not only an experienced sailor but also a highly skillful submariner. He had been promoted to lieutenant-commander in December 1912, having returned to the surface fleet the following year,

**"IN SPITE OF GREAT  
NAVIGATIONAL DIFFICULTIES  
... AND OF THE HOURLY  
DANGER OF ATTACK FROM THE  
ENEMY, HE ... SUCCEEDED  
IN SINKING TWO TURKISH  
GUNBOATS AND ONE LARGE  
MILITARY TRANSPORT"**

VC Citation,  
London Gazette, 21 May 1915



Lieutenant-Commander Edward Courtney Boyle aboard E14. Boyle was one of the Royal Navy's most experienced submariners during the Gallipoli campaign



© Getty

“LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER E.C.  
BOYLE IN E14 WAS NOW ALONE  
... AT DAWN ON APRIL 27 ...  
HE RAN PAST CHANAK ON THE  
SURFACE, WITH ALL THE FORTS  
FIRING ON HIM”

Naval Operations, Sir Julian S.  
Corbett, 1921

serving aboard the battleship HMS St Vincent. Nevertheless he once again returned to the submarine service in March 1914, this time being posted to the depot ship HMS Adamant and placed in command of D3.

It would be with D3 that Boyle would be mentioned in despatches for his patrols in the Heligoland Bight during August 1914. One officer who served under Boyle at this time was William Guy Carr, who described his commanding officer as "very reserved and immensely self-contained. Off duty, you would find him immersed in some technical book or other most of the time. He had a sense of humour, but it never ran away with him".

In October the same year Boyle assumed command of HMS E14 and, along with E11 and E15, departed Portsmouth bound for the North Aegean in March 1914, arriving at Mudros in the Greek island of Lemnos the following month (although E11 had to put in at Malta due to technical issues). These 181 feet long, 660-ton ‘E-boats’ or ‘E-class’ submarines, such as Boyle’s E14, are considered one of the most successful designs used by the Royal Navy. A total of 57 were built before and during the First World War, each capable of 16 knots on the surface or ten submerged. They were also relatively well-armed for the time, boasting five torpedo tubes, although they were not fitted with deck guns until later in the war. A crew of an E-boat typically consisted of around 30 men.

On 27 April E14 broke off from the main fleet and headed for the Dardanelles. The costly Gallipoli campaign was by now well underway

**HMS E14**, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Edward Boyle during the Gallipoli campaign, anchored at Mudros in 1915

**"FOR MOST CONSPICUOUS BRAVERY, IN COMMAND OF SUBMARINE E.14, WHEN HE DIVED HIS VESSEL UNDER THE ENEMY MINEFIELDS AND ENTERED THE SEA OF MARMORA"**

**VC Citation,  
London Gazette, 21 May 1915**

and Boyle had received orders to navigate the perilous route through minefields and sunken vessels while attempting to dodge Turkish patrols and their deadly shore batteries.

Initially Boyle tried to remain on the surface as much as possible, during which he was seen standing proudly alone on the conning tower. However, when Turkish shells began to splash in the water around his boat, Boyle ordered E14 to dive, going down to 90 feet, passing under a deadly minefield.

During his dangerous journey Boyle spotted through his periscope the 700-ton Turkish gunboat Paykisevkei. Ordering his men into

action E14 fired two torpedoes at the gunboat, the second of which struck and sank her.

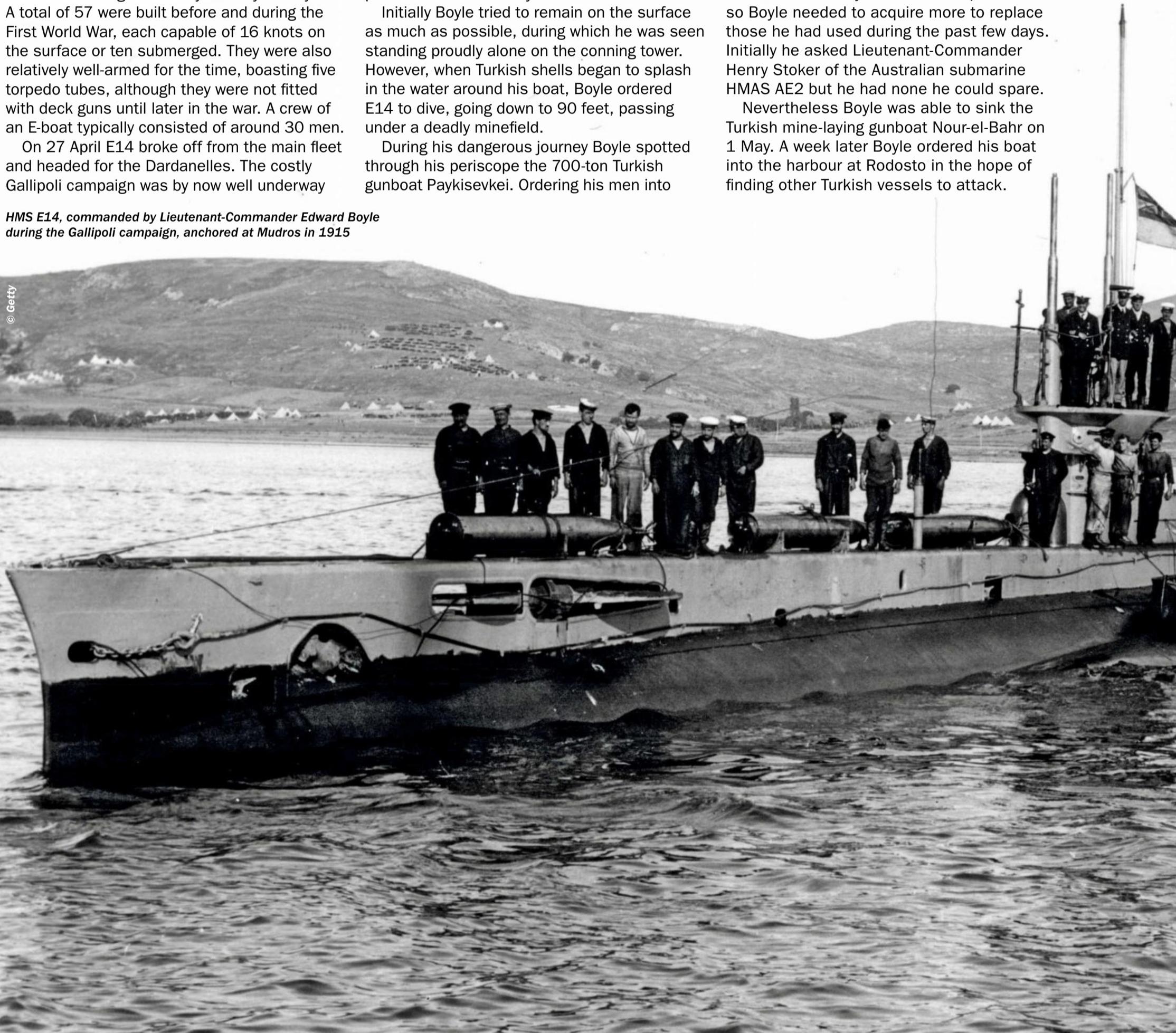
With this first little victory achieved Boyle continued his journey, soon arriving in the Sea of Marmara having spent some uncomfortable 16-hours submerged.

Having been submerged for so long E14 was in urgent need of surfacing in order to recharge her batteries. Unfortunately for Boyle, there were so many Turkish patrols on the surface that he was finding it difficult to bring his boat back up, being forced to repeatedly dive after attracting the attention of the enemy. Later he received a signal with orders to make transports his priority targets and, at around 1.15pm on the 29 April, he spotted two Turkish transports under escort of three destroyers.

Unfortunately for Boyle the escorting destroyers spotted E14's periscope and began shelling her. Undeterred he went on the attack himself, firing on both transports with torpedoes. The first torpedo missed the first transport but the second hit and sank the other. Another victory for E14 and her crew.

The E-boats only carried ten torpedoes and so Boyle needed to acquire more to replace those he had used during the past few days. Initially he asked Lieutenant-Commander Henry Stoker of the Australian submarine HMAS AE2 but he had none he could spare.

Nevertheless Boyle was able to sink the Turkish mine-laying gunboat Nour-el-Bahr on 1 May. A week later Boyle ordered his boat into the harbour at Rodosto in the hope of finding other Turkish vessels to attack.



In this he was disappointed to find no available targets and alarmed when he was hotly engaged by Turkish troops from the shore. Reluctantly he had to order E14 to withdraw from the harbour.

Boyle's disappointment soon disappeared when, on 10 May, he sank the 5,000-ton troopship Guj Djemal, an ex-White Star liner that was believed to be carrying around 6,000 Turkish troops and an artillery battery. It would be the largest vessel sunk by E14.

Now down to only one torpedo, which had proved to be defective, there was little else Boyle could do but he nevertheless managed to force a small steamer to run ashore near Panedos. Despite his lack of torpedoes, Boyle received orders to remain on patrol, the sheer presence of E14 believed to be having a negative effect on enemy shipping. Indeed her 22-day patrol ensured no Turkish vessel ever felt safe in the Sea of Marmara.

Remaining on the surface E14 cruised just off the coast until, on the 18 May, Boyle re-joined the fleet after having again run the petrifying gauntlet of the Dardanelles. Boyle's time in the Sea of Marmara, however, was not over just yet. E14 would make two further patrols in the area between June and August.

On 21 May 1915 the award of the Victoria Cross to Boyle was announced in the London Gazette. His citation read, "For most conspicuous bravery, in command of Submarine E.14, when he dived his vessel under the enemy minefields and entered the Sea of Marmara [sic] on the 27 April, 1915.

## "OFF DUTY, YOU WOULD FIND HIM IMMersed IN SOME TECHNICAL BOOK OR OTHER MOST OF THE TIME. HE HAD A SENSE OF HUMOUR, BUT IT NEVER RAN AWAY WITH HIM"

**Lieutenant William Guy Carr**

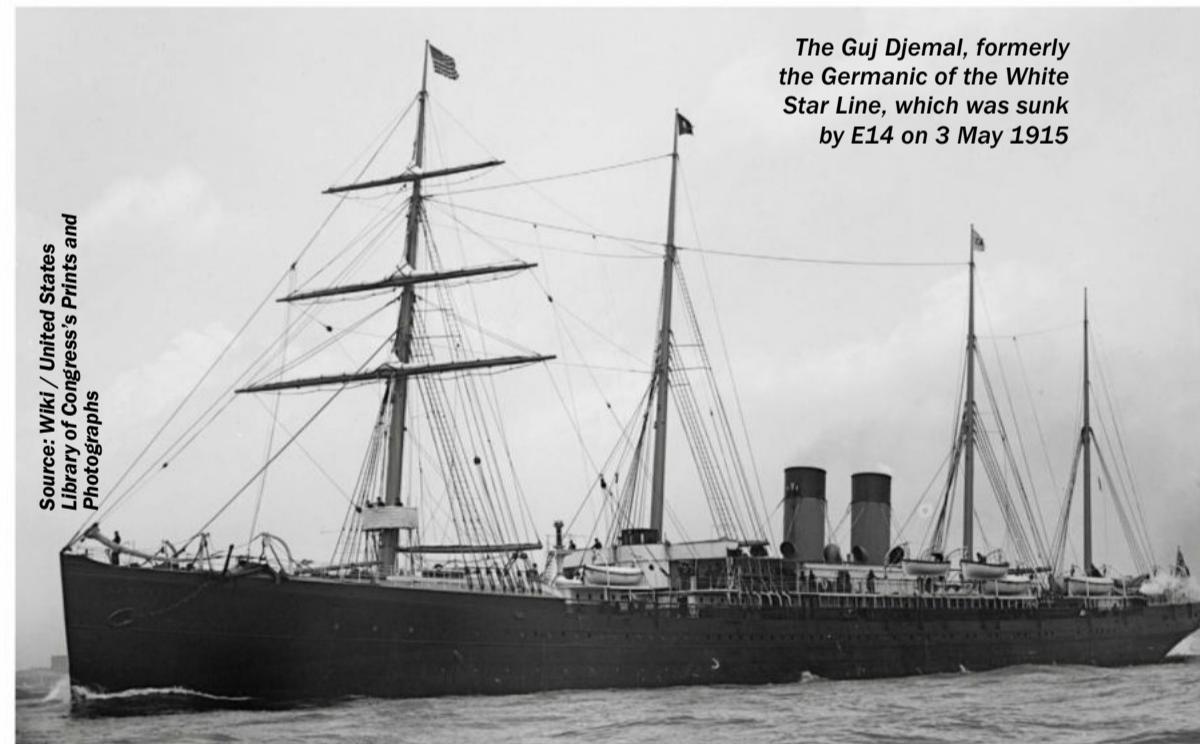
In spite of great navigational difficulties from strong currents, of the continual neighbourhood of hostile patrols, and of the hourly danger of attack from the enemy, he continued to operate in the narrow waters of the Straits and succeeded in sinking two Turkish gunboats and one large military transport."

In addition Boyle was also promoted to commander, receiving his VC from King George V at Buckingham Palace on 1 March 1916. He was not the only member of E14's crew to be decorated for their time in the Sea of Marmara: Lieutenants Edward Stanley and Reginald Lawrence both receiving the Distinguished Service Cross, while the remainder of the crew were all awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.

E14 would later receive a new commander, Lieutenant-Commander Geoffrey Saxton White who would also be awarded the VC, albeit posthumously, for his actions while attacking a Turkish merchant ship in the Dardanelles in January 1918. Unfortunately one of the torpedoes fired by E14 detonated prematurely forcing the boat to the surface. Now visible E14 was shelled by a Turkish battery near Kum Kale. White was killed during the shelling and E14 sunk. Only nine of her crew survived. E14 was rediscovered in June 2012 and was the first E-class submarine ever to be discovered intact.

Following the end of the war Boyle was promoted to captain in June 1920 and placed in command of the depot ship Platypus. He would return to the surface fleet in 1922, assuming command of the light cruiser Birmingham and later the Carysfort in 1924. Other commands followed including the dreadnought battleship Iron Duke in 1929. Promotion to rear-admiral came on 18 October 1932, but Boyle retired from the Royal Navy the next day. However he would be recalled in 1939 as Flag Officer in Charge at London until 1942.

Tragically, in December 1967, he was struck by a lorry while crossing the A30 in Sunningdale. His injuries were so bad that he never recovered, dying on the 16 December, aged 84. Boyle is buried in Woking Cemetery and his VC is currently on display at the Royal Navy Submarine Museum in Gosport, Hampshire.



*The Guj Djemal, formerly the Germanic of the White Star Line, which was sunk by E14 on 3 May 1915*

*Officers and crew of E14, who conducted the 22-day patrol in the Sea of Marmara in April and May 1915*



*Source: Wiki / AWN*

# Operator's Handbook

# VICKERS VIMY

This RAF heavy bomber paved the way for peacetime travel

## OCTAGONAL ENGINES

The nacelles holding the engine were a distinctive octagonal shape and were suspended from struts between the wings.

## ON THE NOSE

The wooden nose skid helped prevent the aircraft tipping on landing, a common danger with First World War era aircraft.

## LIGHT TO WORK BY

The glass panels in the fuselage were to provide light while the gunner managed his magazines, or moved his gun to the lower position.

## BOMB LOAD

The bay could hold a variety of deadly loads, or could be used to hold long range fuel tanks.



WORDS STUART HADAWAY

**T**he Vimy was designed for a bombing campaign against Germany, but it would make its name as a trailblazer, opening the world's skies to long-range flights. As the RAF's main frontline heavy bomber it would serve in the UK and the Middle East from 1919 through to the end of the 1920s, but its main claim to fame is three magnificent flights that proved that aircraft could, and would, revolutionise global travel.

In June 1919 British pilots John Alcock and Arthur Brown became the first men to fly non-stop across the Atlantic. Taking off from Newfoundland they landed in Ireland just over 16 hours later in a specially modified civilian Vimy. Two more, perhaps even more impressive flights followed. Between November and December 1919 two of Australia's top wartime pilots, brothers Keith and Ross Macpherson Smith, plus two air mechanics flew home from the UK. The flight took a month and nearly 136 flying hours. Between February and March 1920 two South African military pilots, Pierre van Ryneveld and Quintin Brand, flew a Vimy from the UK to Egypt, a second Vimy from there to Rhodesia, then completed their journey in a DH9. On arrival Ryneveld became the first commandant of the South African Air Force. Brand would later command No. 10 Group RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain.

**"ITS MAIN CLAIM TO FAME IS THREE MAGNIFICENT FLIGHTS THAT PROVED THAT AIRCRAFT COULD, AND WOULD, REVOLUTIONISE GLOBAL TRAVEL"**

## VICKERS VIMY BOMBER

COMMISSIONED:	1917
ORIGIN:	BRITISH
LENGTH:	13.35M (43FT 6.5IN)
WINGSPAN:	20.75M (68FT 1IN)
RANGE:	1400KM (900 ML)
ENGINE:	2 X ROLLS ROYCE EAGLE VIII 270KW (360HP)
CREW:	3
PRIMARY WEAPONS:	22476LB (1,123KG) BOMBS AND 2 X 7.7MM (0.303IN) LEWIS MACHINE GUNS

This view of a Vimy shows the Scarff Rings in the forward and rear turrets. The guns were rarely carried in peacetime.

**"A HATCH IN THE BOTTOM OF THE FUSELAGE COULD THEORETICALLY BE USED TO SHIFT THE UPPER GUN DOWN TO PROVIDE PROTECTION BELOW"**

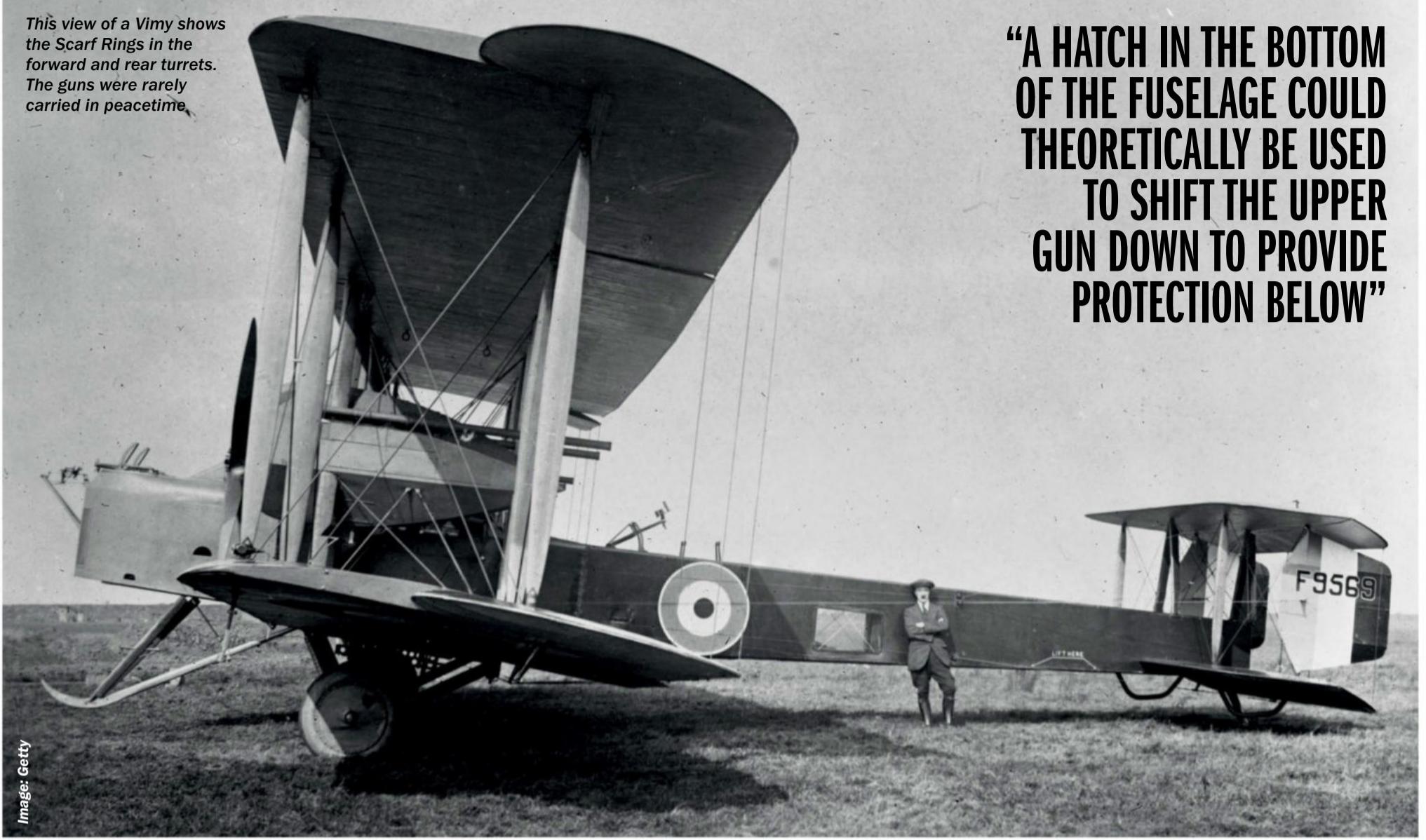


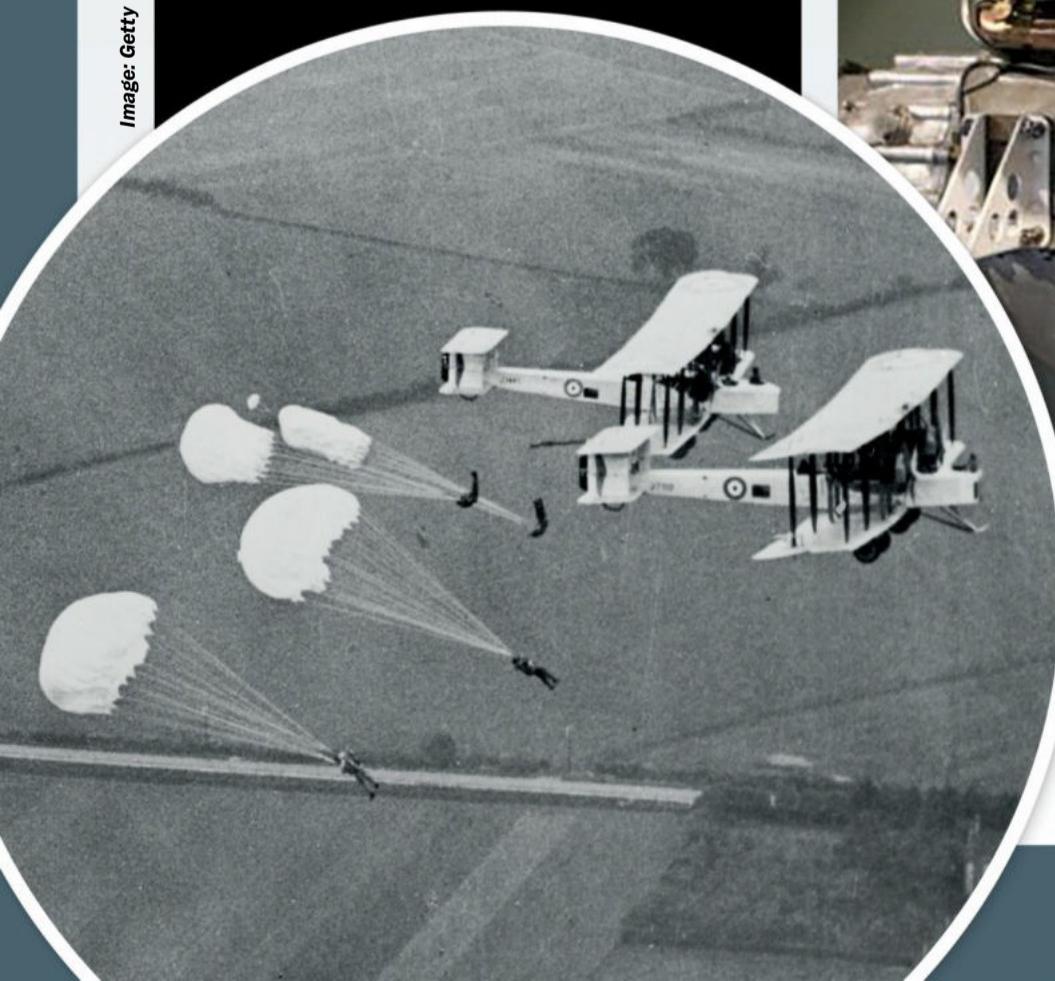
Image: Getty

## ARMAMENT

The Vimy's bomb load was 2 x 104kg (230lb) and 18 x 51kg (112lb) bombs, split across an internal bay between the wings behind the main spar, and external racks under the inner lower wings. Plans were also made to equip them with two torpedoes. The aircraft had two 7.7mm (0.303in) Lewis machine guns on Scarff Rings, one in the nose and one midway down the fuselage. A hatch in the bottom of the fuselage could theoretically be used to shift the upper gun down to provide protection below.

*Below: Vimy's were also used to train paratroopers, here in 1929*

Image: Getty



*The Rolls Royce Eagle VIII was an exceptionally well-engineered engine for the time*

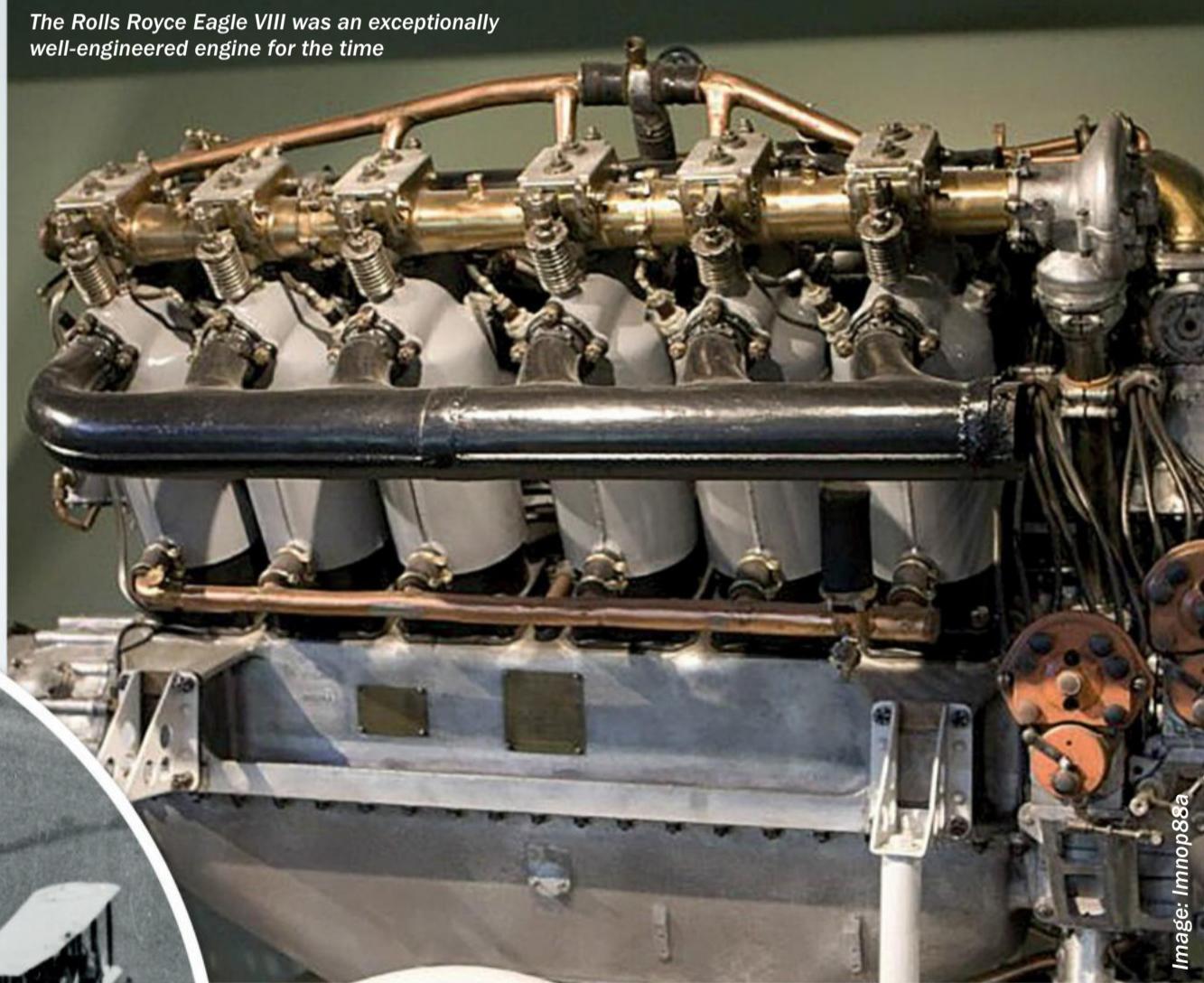
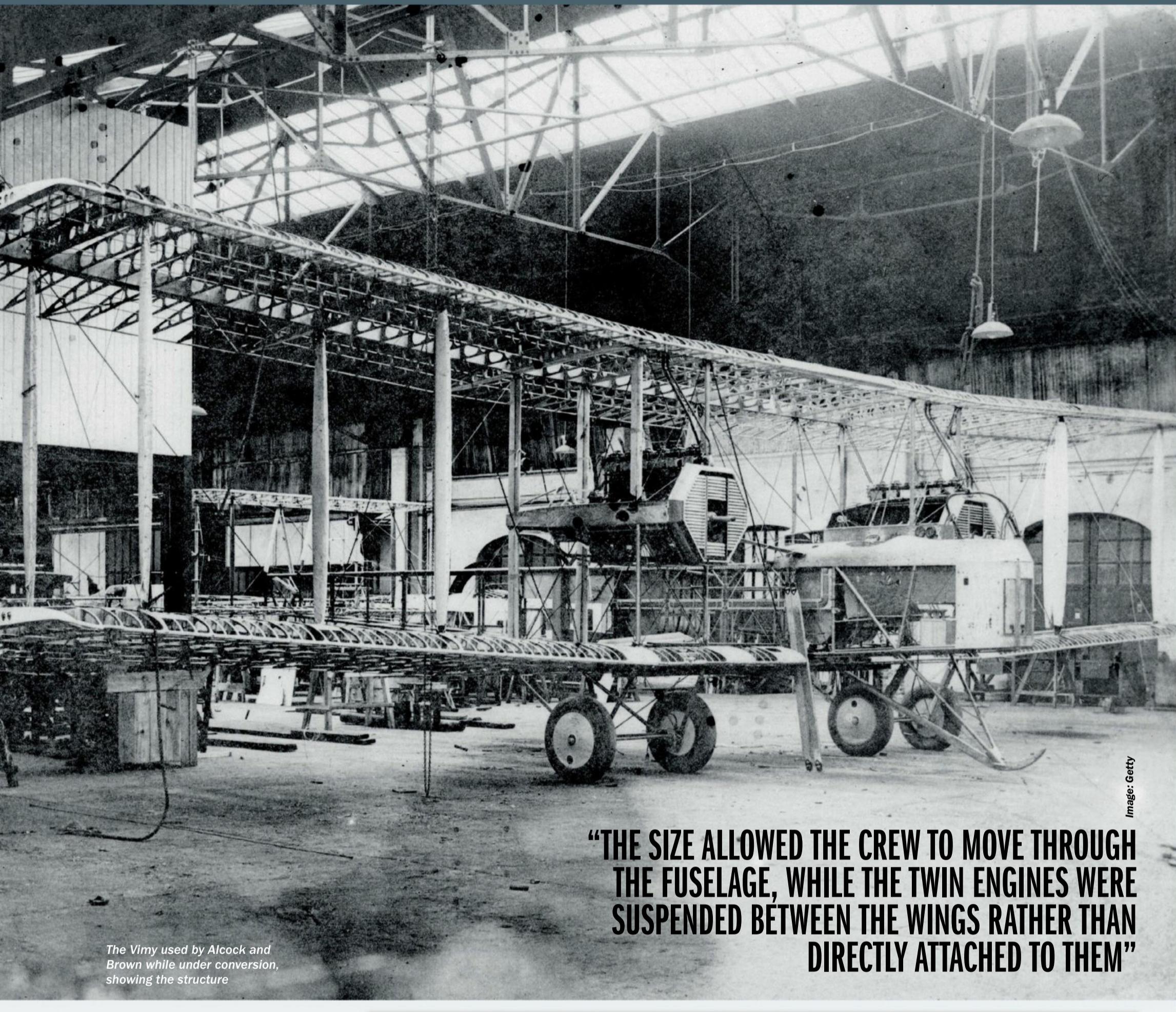


Image: Innop88a

## ENGINE

The Rolls Royce Eagle was that company's first aero engine and as such was the first in an illustrious line. First designed in 1914 it was a 12 cylinder in-line engine that went through extensive development during the war until the Mk. VIII version for the Vimy and was rated at 270kW (360hp). The Mk. VIII was the most produced Eagle variant (just over 3,300 out of a total of 4,681 Eagle engines), and was famed for its high-quality engineering and reliability.



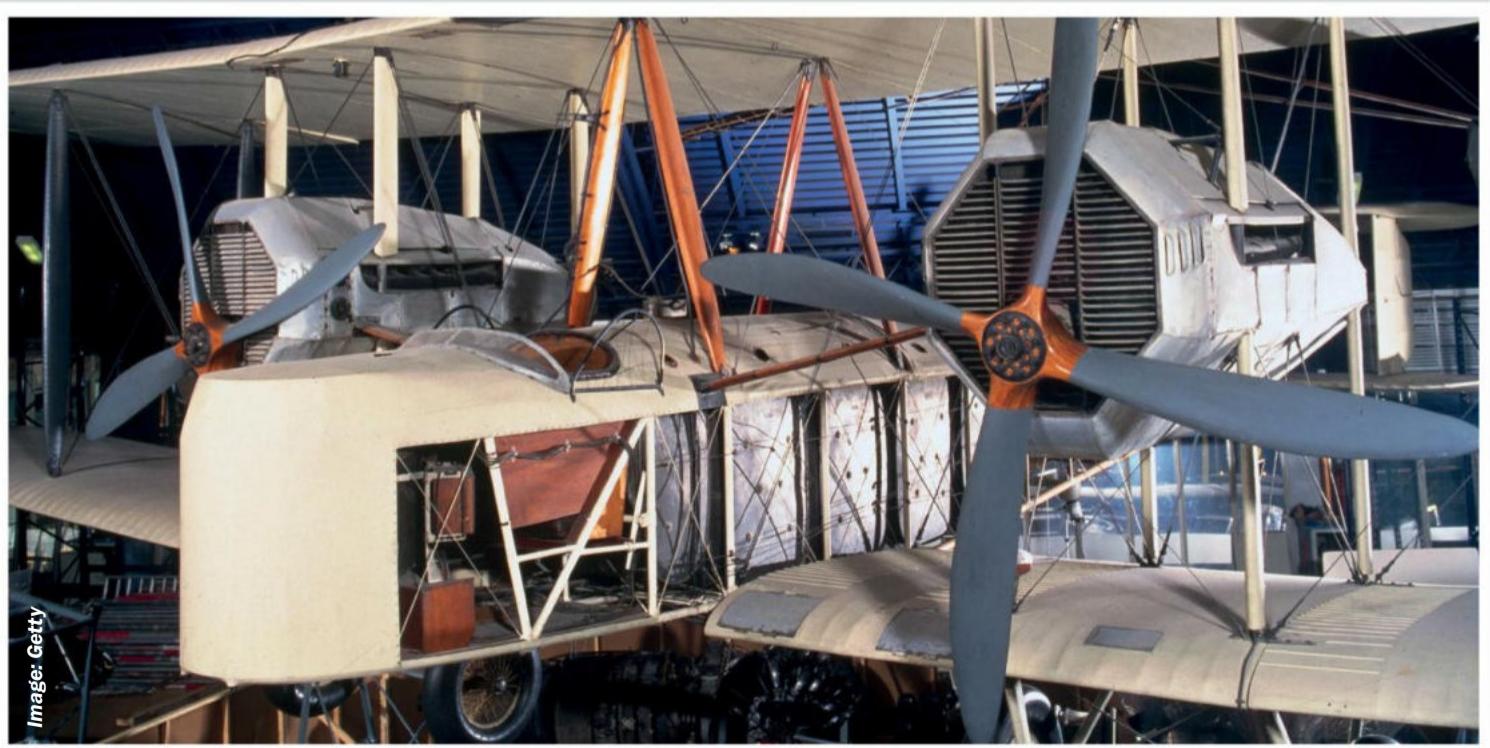
**"THE SIZE ALLOWED THE CREW TO MOVE THROUGH THE FUSELAGE, WHILE THE TWIN ENGINES WERE SUSPENDED BETWEEN THE WINGS RATHER THAN DIRECTLY ATTACHED TO THEM"**

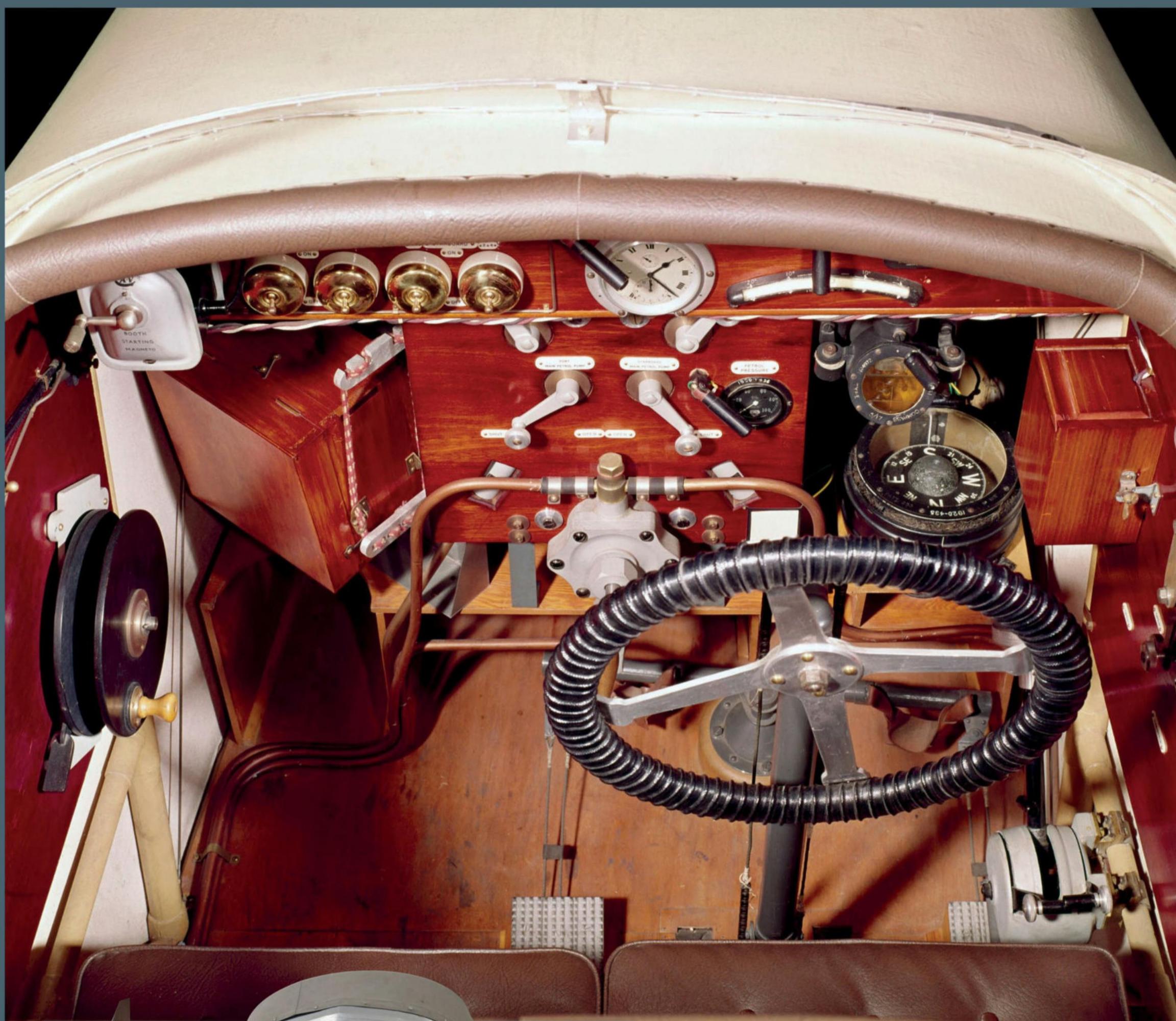
*The Vimy used by Alcock and Brown while under conversion, showing the structure*

## DESIGN

The Vimy followed the standard general design patterns of First World War aircraft – a wooden structure covered in doped linen. It differed in having a plywood covering on the nose section back to behind the cockpit, and in its scale. The size allowed the crew to move through the fuselage, while the twin engines were suspended between the wings rather than directly attached to them. The tail was also unconventional, with a biplane configuration and twin rudders to maximise the control surface areas.

*Right: Alcock and Brown's Vimy at The Science Museum, London, is cut-away to show the interior construction*





*The cockpit of the Vimy was cramped considering it was designed for long range operations*

## COCKPIT

The Vimy's cockpit was cramped with a pilot and co-pilot crammed in beside each other. The pilot needed both hands on the control wheel, using all their strength to haul the heavy aircraft around the sky. The co-pilot operated the rest of the controls. Their open cockpit was surprisingly sheltered with the nose acting as a windbreak, although the closeness of the propellers (within arm's reach) could lead to the cockpit being showered in water. Some of the engine gauges were on the sides of the engines.

*The front gunner/bomb aimer position had small glass panels for better visibility*



*Image: Getty*

## SERVICE HISTORY

The Vimy was a heavy bomber commissioned in 1917 to conduct a bombing campaign against Germany. The first Vimy flew in November 1917 and a series of different marques were tested (mostly differing in engine types) until the Mk. IV, powered by Rolls Royce Eagles, was settled on as the production model. Deliveries began in October 1918 with a single example being sent to France for operational evaluation. The war ended the following month and deliveries slowed. The type was then settled on as the RAF's main post-war heavy bomber and it finally entered frontline service in July 1919.

Although many of the original orders were cancelled around 240 were built and served in the UK and Middle East. After leaving frontline service in 1929 the type remained in use for flying training and parachute training (with the parachutists clinging to the wing struts!) until just before the Second World War.

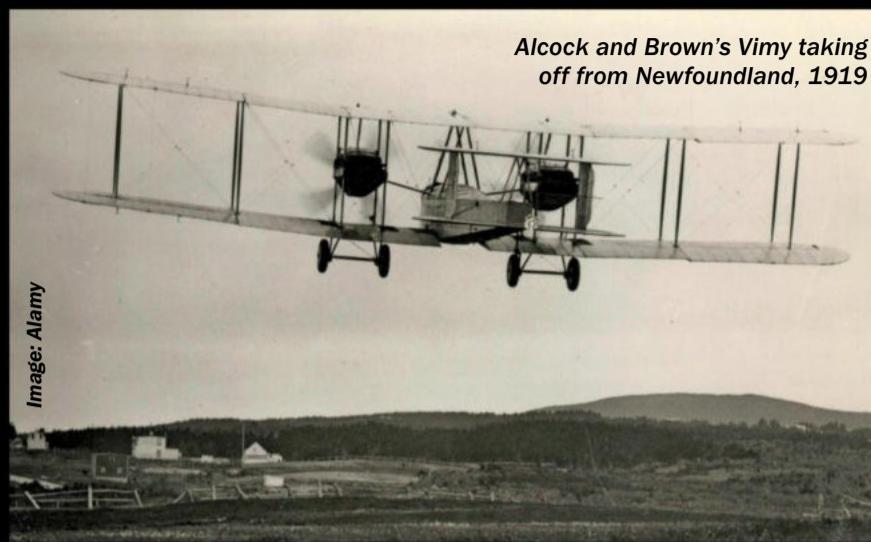
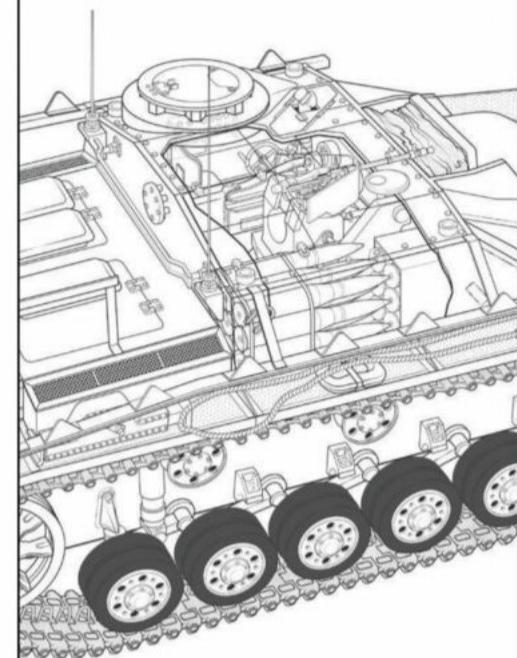
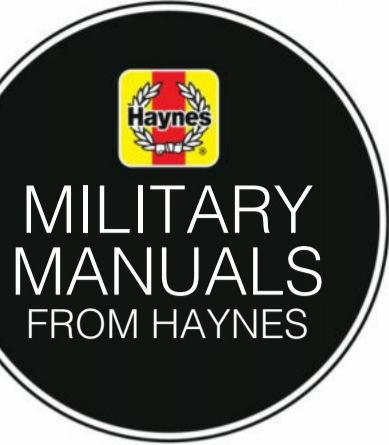


Image: Getty

An RAF Vimy in Egypt, 1920s



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## 90 WWII IN PICTURES: DECEMBER 1939

AS FRENCH AND BRITISH TROOPS DUG IN  
FOR WINTER, THE ROYAL NAVY AND RAF  
WERE FIGHTING HARD AT SEA

HISTORY  
WAR

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IN PICTURES: HISTORY OF  
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# MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover the Berlin Wall at the NAM, Christmas with the Royal Engineers and an obscure RAF base in the Cotswolds



The section of the Berlin Wall and a Fox armoured car greet visitors to the National Army Museum

## ANGLO-GERMAN POST-WAR HISTORY

The National Army Museum is commemorating the British Army's long role in Germany with a new book, exhibition and a section of Berlin's infamous barrier

As Britain re-examines its role in Europe the National Army Museum has been reflecting on three-quarters of a century of the British Army in Germany. A section of the Berlin Wall has been installed to mark the 30th anniversary of its fall in November 1989. The NAM is also launching a new book about British forces in Germany to tie in with a major new exhibition for 2020.

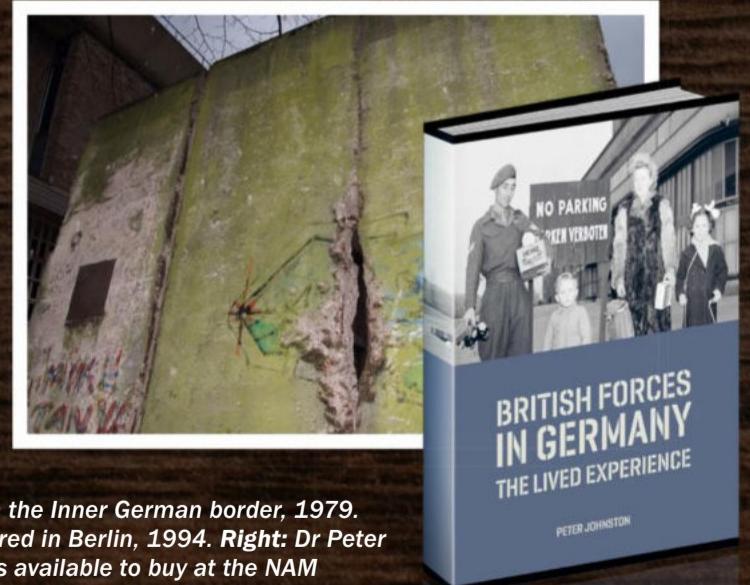
The fall of the Berlin Wall was a seismic event in modern European history and a section of it has now been installed in the foyer of the NAM. Over three metres tall and two metres wide the wall allows visitors to imagine what it was like to live in the shadow of this physical and ideological divide between capitalist and communist Berlin. Its fall shifted political power and allowed free movement across the entire city. Next to the wall sits a Fox armoured car painted in urban camouflage, which is on loan from the Tank Museum. This type of vehicle was used for reconnaissance in Germany from 1975.

Britain was one of the four occupying powers of Berlin and Germany during the Cold War. Dr Peter Johnston, head of research at the NAM has written a new book called *British Forces In Germany: The Lived Experience*, which is available to purchase in the museum for

£35. It documents the British Army's time in Germany and is the authorised account of the military's 75-year commitment to the defence of Western Europe.

The NAM will also be opening a major exhibition in 2020 called 'Foe To Friend: The British Army In Germany Since 1945'. The last major units are returning to the UK from Germany this year so both the book and exhibition will mark an important time in the army's history. The exhibition will open on 8 May 2020 to mark 75 years since VE Day.

Justin Maciejewski, director of the NAM says, "We are proud to be able to tell the extraordinary story of this journey from war to the close friendship we have with Germany today. It is estimated that around two million people from the Armed Forces community have been a part of the British Army's time in Germany. As such, it is especially valuable to tell the story through the testimony of those who have experienced it first-hand."



Above, top: A training patrol of the Queen's Royal Lancers on the Inner German border, 1979.  
Above, middle: The museum's section of the wall as it appeared in Berlin, 1994. Right: Dr Peter Johnston's *British Forces In Germany: The Lived Experience* is available to buy at the NAM

FOR INFORMATION AND OPENING TIMES PLEASE VISIT: [WWW.NAM.AC.UK](http://WWW.NAM.AC.UK)



Images: Jez Endean

## SAPPERS AND SANTA

**The Royal Engineers Museum is hosting a weekend of festive events with a wartime theme**

The Royal Engineers Museum tells the story of Britain's regiment of sappers along with an overview of British military engineering. Based in Gillingham, Kent, the museum is the largest military museum in the county and contains a fascinating collection. Famous artefacts include 25 Victoria Crosses, the Duke of Wellington's map of Waterloo, John Chard VC's weapons from the Anglo-Zulu War and the world's first guided torpedo among others.

There are events at the museum throughout the year and for the festive season it is hosting a 'Wartime Christmas Weekend' during 7-8 December 2019. Visitors can experience how Christmas was celebrated during WWII

with a variety of live demonstrations and festive handicrafts. There will also be a Lindy Hop class and Sapper Santa's Grotto & Workshop where children can write letters, receive a gift and even create their own vintage ceramic decorations. On Sunday 8 December the museum will be joined by the Brompton & Invicta Military Wives Choir who will sing traditional carols.

Entry to the event is included in standard admission prices with family activities and Sapper Santa's Grotto costing an additional £2.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.RE-MUSEUM.CO.UK](http://WWW.RE-MUSEUM.CO.UK)**

## COTSWOLDS AERIAL WARFARE



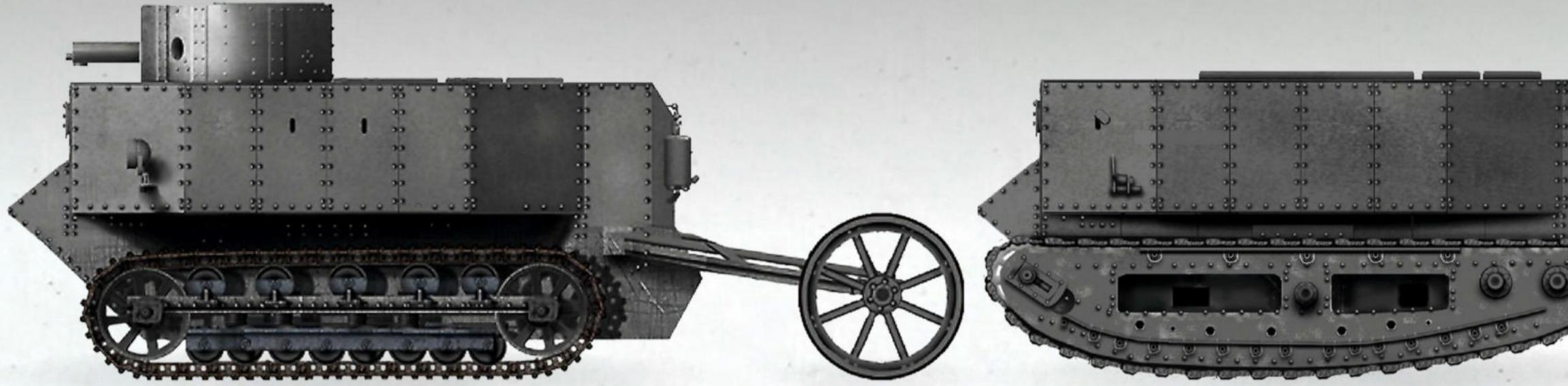
**Wellington Aviation Museum commemorates the wartime history of RAF Moreton-in-Marsh in Gloucestershire**

During WWII RAF Moreton-in-Marsh was an Operational Training Unit (OTU) that mainly flew Vickers Wellington medium bombers. Primarily used as a night bomber the Wellington was gradually superseded by Avro Lancaster bombers but it remained an excellent training aircraft. The base was one of many flight-training stations across the UK where large numbers of trainee crews passed through before they achieved their 'wings'. The village of Moreton-in-Marsh was also occupied by the American 'Super 6th' Armored Division's Sherman tanks before they departed for Normandy in June 1944. The airfield is now used by the local Fire Service College but the Wellington Aviation Museum remains dedicated to its wartime service.

Located on the edge of the village of Moreton-in-Marsh and housed in a building of just one room, the museum contains many military history items from the surrounding area. Artefacts include a sectioned Hercules aircraft, uniforms, flags, artwork and 4,000-pound bomb casings.

The Wellington bomber was partially designed by legendary inventor Sir Barnes Wallis who incorporated a 'geodetic structure' into its design. The museum contains a tail section of the aircraft from the local RAF base as well as propellers and wheels.

**FOR MORE VISIT: [WWW.WELLINGTONAVIATION.ORG](http://WWW.WELLINGTONAVIATION.ORG)**



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O P I N I O N

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# DID AMERICANS INVENT THE TANK?

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While the Mark I holds the plaudits for being the first tracked, armoured vehicle to storm the battlefield – albeit at a steady walking pace – tank historian Craig Moore reveals that the story of the tank's origins may lie across the Atlantic

**D**uring World War I the Pioneer Tractor Company from Winona, Minnesota, designed a rather strange-looking tank that would be later known as the Skeleton Tank. The crew was encased in an armoured box at the centre of the vehicle with a gun turret on top and an engine on each side of the compartment. The driver had a small horizontal vision slit at the front of the armoured box. The commander/gunner had a vision slit in the turret.

The tracks were carried on mounted rollers installed on a tubular frame covered with wood. The pipe construction would allow for the tank to be dismantled and shipped relatively easily and then be reassembled on arrival in the war zone. Another advantage to this tubular design was that if one of the pipes was damaged it could easily be replaced. By using wood, steel pipes and standard plumbing fixtures, the materials and maintenance skills needed to construct, maintain and repair the Skeleton

Tank were minimal. The open design of the tank meant that what was behind the tank was visible through the tank. It did not need camouflage to merge in with its location.

The crew of two were protected by 12.7mm of armour. The driver sat to the front, with the gunner behind him, manning the turret. The proposed armament was a single .30 cal machine gun. It had a maximum speed of 8km/h (5mph) which was similar to the British tanks of 1916. Only one vehicle was built, sporting a dummy gun and turret. By October 1918 the prototype was ready for trials, but when the Armistice was signed in November 1918 the development programme was cancelled. It was never used in active service.

So, who came up with the idea of rhomboid shaped tank first? This is a disputed subject. On 20 October 1914 British Lieutenant Colonel Ernest Swinton submitted to the British War Office in writing his idea that an armoured vehicle was necessary to overcome the

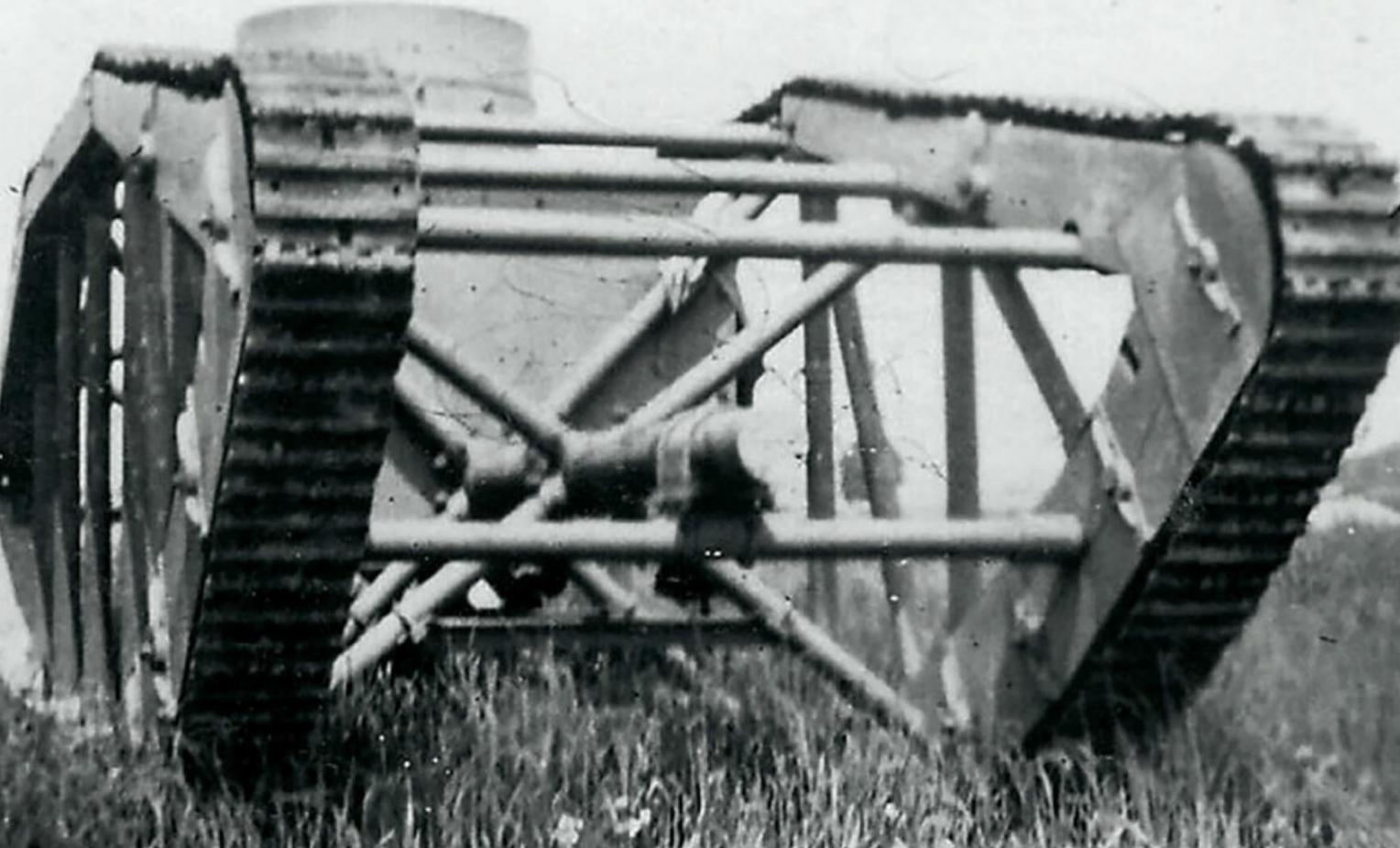
stalemate of trench warfare by forcing its way through barbed wire obstacles, climbing over trenches and destroying or crushing machine-gun nests.

The vice president of the US Pioneer Tractor Company, Mr Edwin Wheelock, insisted that his company completed the blueprints for the rhomboid shaped Skeleton Tank and brought them over to England before that date.

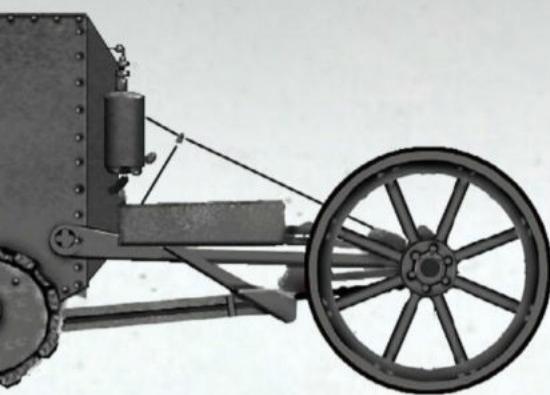
In August 1914 Wheelock lost a contract to sell Pioneer tracked tractors in Canada because of war being declared in Europe. He started to design a war machine based on the caterpillar tracks used on his tractors but lengthened to run along a rhomboid shaped framework. He tried to sell his idea to the Canadians, but again they were not interested.

In February 1915 the British Government Landships Committee granted William Foster & Company of Lincoln the contract to build the first prototype British tank called the Lincoln No.1 Machine.

*The Pioneer Tractor Company Skeleton Tank prototype with a rhomboid shaped track system*



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**FRONTLINE@FUTURENET.COM**



Back in Minnesota, Wheelock hired Frances J. Lowe to try and sell Pioneer tractors and his war machine design to the British. Lowe took the blueprints and some tractors to England. In April 1915 he had a meeting with Colonel Holden at the War Office in London.

Holden dismissed the design as being unworkable with the excuse that the initial proposed weight of 25 tons was too heavy to cross bridges currently found in Belgium and France. Lowe, in a later interview for an American newspaper, said he was then introduced to a Royal Navy engineer, Lieutenant Walter Wilson, who took the blueprints to study them further. Lowe was told that he would be contacted if the War Office wanted to place an order. He was never contacted.

Wilson went on to develop the first British tanks with William Tritton of William Foster & Co in Lincoln. The Lincoln No.1 Machine prototype was completed on 9 September 1915. It did not look like Wheelock's design.

**"IN 1919 WHEELOCK READ THAT A £10,000 FINANCIAL REWARD HAD BEEN OFFERED TO THE PERSON WHO CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF USING A TANK IN BATTLE"**

The second prototype with longer tracks, nicknamed 'Little Willie' did not resemble Wheelock's design either.

Walter Wilson's third prototype called 'Mother', completed in December 1915, used a lengthened track to run along a rhomboid shaped framework to give the tank better cross-country performance, allegedly just like the American designed tank on the blueprints.

It was not until newspaper reports and photographs reached Minnesota of the type of tanks being used for the first time in battle did Wheelock get a glimpse of what the British Mark I tank looked like. He was shocked at the similarity to his war machine design. In 1919 Wheelock read that a £10,000 financial reward had been offered to the person who came up with the idea of using a tank in battle. He sent Lowe back to England to claim that reward and find out why his company had not been given the construction contract.

Lowe was not given any information. He could not even find out what happened to the company's blueprints he had submitted. Because of the war nearly all information was classified as 'secret'.

Wheelock made a formal claim for the £10,000 prize money, but after two different hearings a British Prize Court awarded the cash to Lieutenant Colonel Ernest Swinton.

Wheelock's claim was not backed up by validated documentation. He never filed a patent or kept a copy of his blueprints. Lowe said he handed the only copy to Wilson and was never given it back.

**Above, far left:** The Lincoln No.1 Machine tank prototype. The tracks were found to be too short, and it got stuck in the sides of muddy trenches and ditches

**Above, middle:** British 'Little Willie' prototype tank. The tracks were extended at the front to enable it to climb out of shell craters and trenches

**Above, right:** The World War I British Mk. IV male tank had a rhomboid shaped track system that enabled it to cross trenches and climb out of shell craters and trenches

Realistically the British Government, when at war, would not have entered negotiations with a private company of a neutral state to develop and build a new weapon. That company would not legally be able to sell that weapon without breaching its country's neutrality. There was also a risk, in 1914, of America entering an alliance with the German Empire and that new weapon being used by the enemy. Communications and logistics problems also made the idea of a contract being awarded to an American company not practicable in 1914. I believe Wilson was influenced by the rhomboid shaped design he had seen on the blueprint of the Skeleton Tank, but that fact cannot be proved as there is no documentary evidence.



## SKELETON TANK

DIMENSIONS:	25FT X 8FT 5IN X 9FT 6IN (7.62M X 2.56M X 2.89M)
WEIGHT:	9 TONS
CREW:	2 (COMMANDER/GUNNER, DRIVER)
PROPELLSION:	TWO BEAVER 4-CYLINDER WATER COOLED PETROL/GASOLINE ENGINES
SPEED:	5 MPH (8.85 KM/H)
FUEL TANK:	17 GALLONS
FUEL CONSUMPTION:	2 MILES PER GALLON
OPERATIONAL RANGE:	34 MILES (55KM)
ARMAMENT:	.30 CAL MACHINE GUN
ARMOUR:	0.5 IN (12.7MM)
TOTAL PRODUCTION:	1 PROTOTYPE

The US-built Pioneer Tractor Company Skeleton Tank prototype with a rhomboid shaped track system. It is currently on display at the US Army Ordnance Training Support Facility in Fort Lee military base, Virginia. It is used for student training. This tank is currently not on public display



# CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE

Take a look at this fantastic range of gift inspirations, perfect for yourself or the military history buff in your life



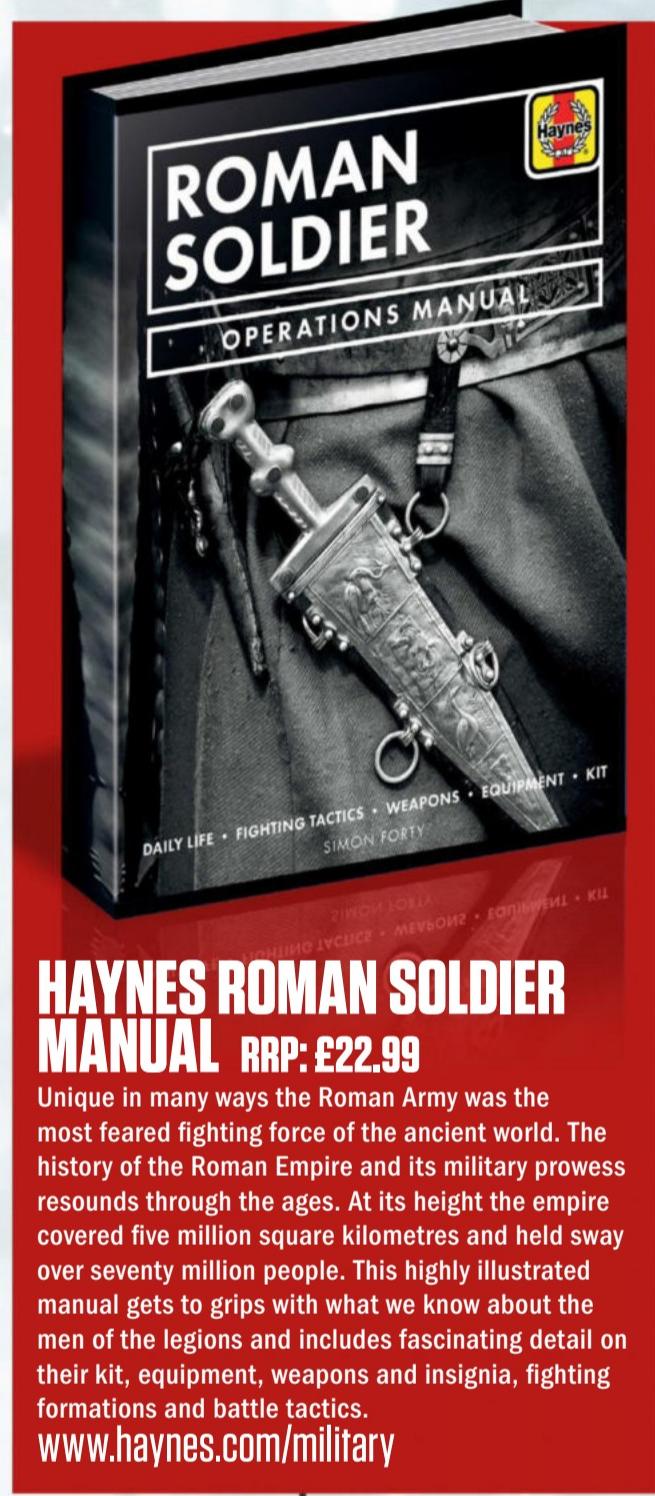
## THIS WAR OF MINE

RRP: £65

In war not everyone is a soldier. This tabletop adaptation of the award-winning videogame depicts the drama and struggle of civilians trapped in a city ravaged by war. Players must endure hardships as they take shelter in a ruined house, which they work to maintain during the day and guard during the night.

The game is playable immediately out of the box with no need to read rules beforehand – you are instantly transported to this harrowing world and will learn how to survive as you go. Simply surviving may not be enough however – whether you can live with the choices you make is another thing entirely.

[www.365games.co.uk](http://www.365games.co.uk)



## HAYNES ROMAN SOLDIER MANUAL

RRP: £22.99

Unique in many ways the Roman Army was the most feared fighting force of the ancient world. The history of the Roman Empire and its military prowess resounds through the ages. At its height the empire covered five million square kilometres and held sway over seventy million people. This highly illustrated manual gets to grips with what we know about the men of the legions and includes fascinating detail on their kit, equipment, weapons and insignia, fighting formations and battle tactics.

[www.haynes.com/military](http://www.haynes.com/military)

## CORGI MILITARY LEGENDS, 1:50 SCALE CHURCHILL MKIII TANK – 6TH SCOTS GUARDS BRIGADE 1943

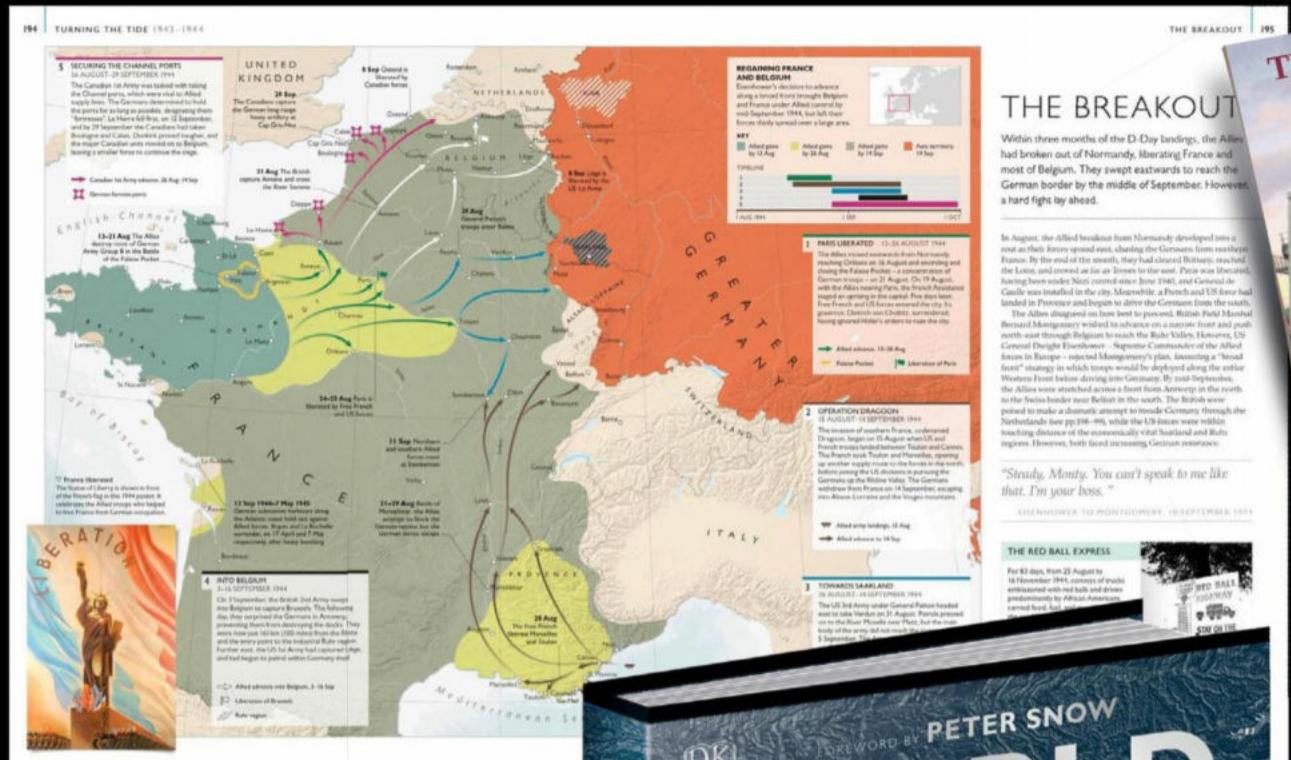
RRP: £49.99

For over 60 years Corgi has prided itself on bringing the highest quality die-cast metal models to the market. Military Legends is a new range from the British Brand which showcases the multitude of vehicles that went to war including military support vehicles alongside striking tanks in 1:50 scale.

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## WWII MAP BY MAP

RRP: £25

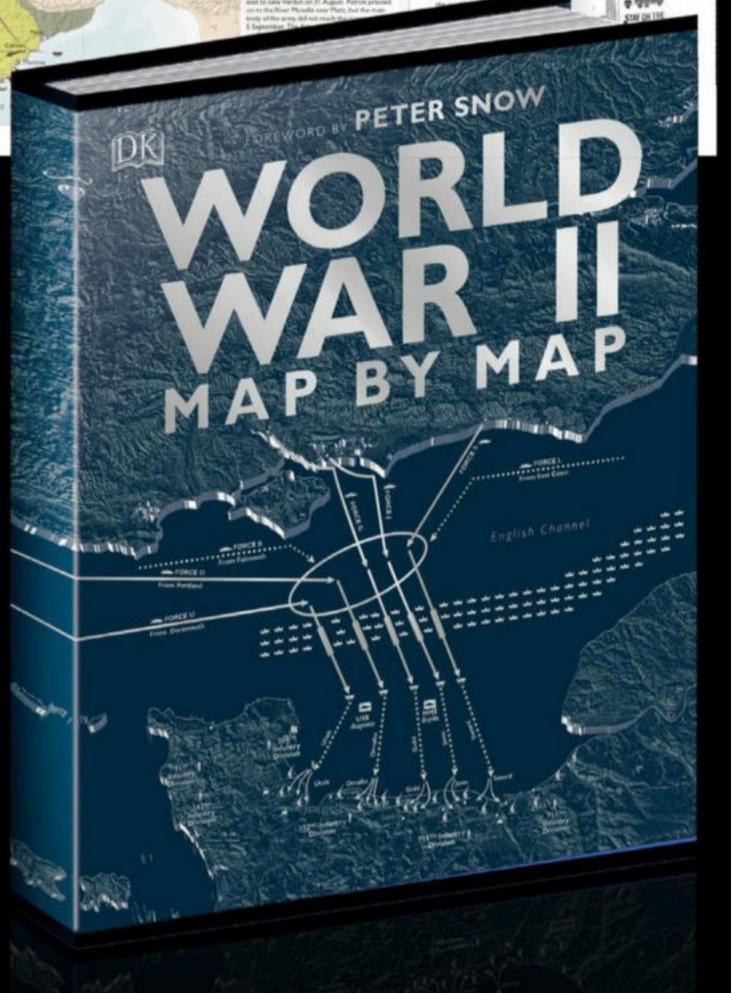
In this recent release from renowned publisher DK you can explore every major campaign and battle of WWII through stunning, detailed maps and illustrations. From the tense months leading up to the outbreak of war to the final push towards Berlin almost six years later, every stage of the conflict is retold as it unfolded in engaging and vivid detail.

Written by a team of expert historians led by Richard Overy this is a must-read coffee table tome for every military history enthusiast, but also ideal for younger readers eager to learn. Also included is a foreword written by broadcaster and historian Peter Snow.

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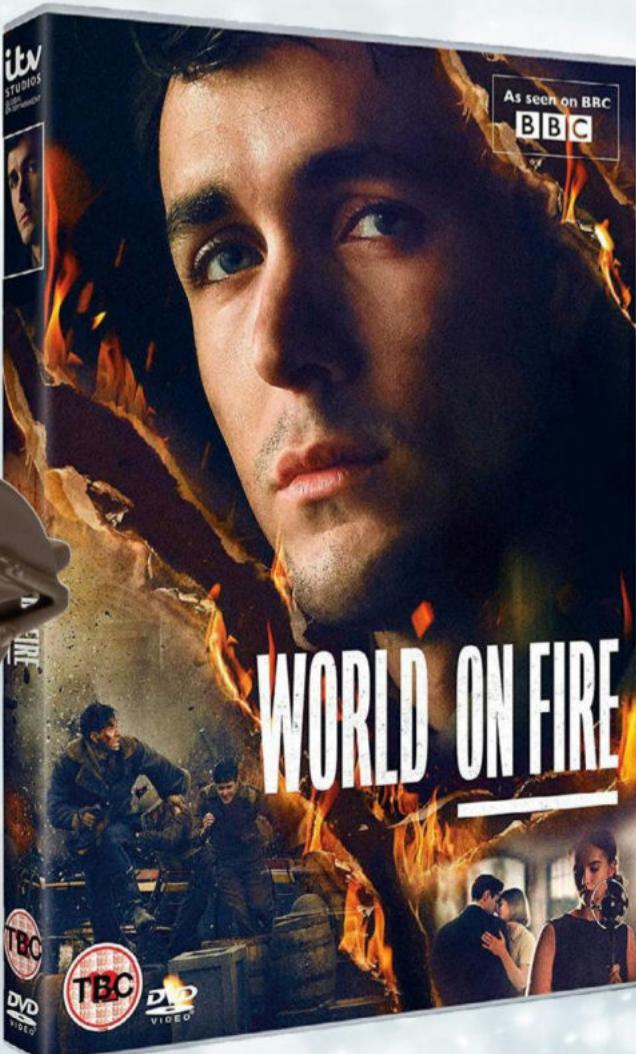


## WORLD ON FIRE RRP: £24.99

Set across the world during 1939-45, this 2019 drama series tells the stories of ordinary men and women living through the most devastating period of the 20th century.

Created by award-winning writer Peter Bowker (*The A Word, Marvellous*) and starring Academy Award winner Helen Hunt (*Mad About You, As Good As It Gets, Twister*), and Emmy and BAFTA winner Sean Bean (*Sharpe, Game Of Thrones*) *The World On Fire* is now available on DVD and on Digital Download from ITV Studios Global Entertainment.

[www.itvstudios.com](http://www.itvstudios.com)



## ACES HIGH 2020 CALENDARS £12.95 EACH

Aces High is recognised as one of the world's leading producers of high-quality, and collectible, aviation and military fine art. With stunning artworks depicting iconic scenes from the last century's major conflicts, from the Battle of Britain to the dogfights of the Vietnam War.

In time for 2020, Aces High has released a new pair of calendars, each with a stunning piece of art on every month. Both calendars – *The Battle For Normandy* and *Wings Of Glory* – contain 12 double-page month-by-month pages with outstanding images from some of the world's most collected artists.

[www.aces-high.com](http://www.aces-high.com) email: [uk@aces-high.com](mailto:uk@aces-high.com)  
Tel: 01296 625681

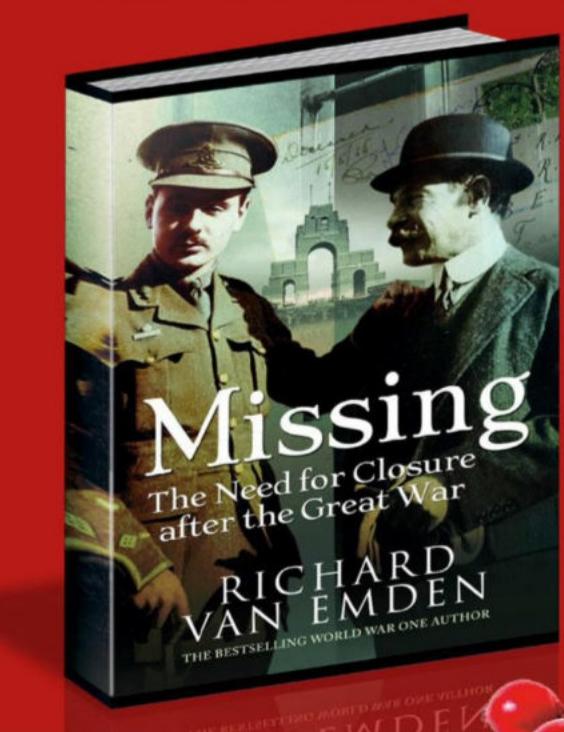
## MISSING: THE NEED FOR CLOSURE AFTER THE GREAT WAR RRP: £20

How long would you look for a missing son, even if you knew he was dead? How long could you justify such a search? Two years? Five years? A lifetime? Angela Mond's son, a Royal Air Force pilot, had been shot down and killed, but where was his body? Using a remarkable collection of previously unseen images, *Missing* is a sweeping, epic story that is as resonant and relevant today, as a hundred years ago.

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# HISTORY OF WAR REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books and films

## THE DEVIL NEXT DOOR

A MUST-SEE DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THE WAR CRIME TRIALS OF JOHN DEMJANUK

**Director:** Yossi Bloch and Daniel Sivan **Distributor:** Netflix

**Released:** Out now

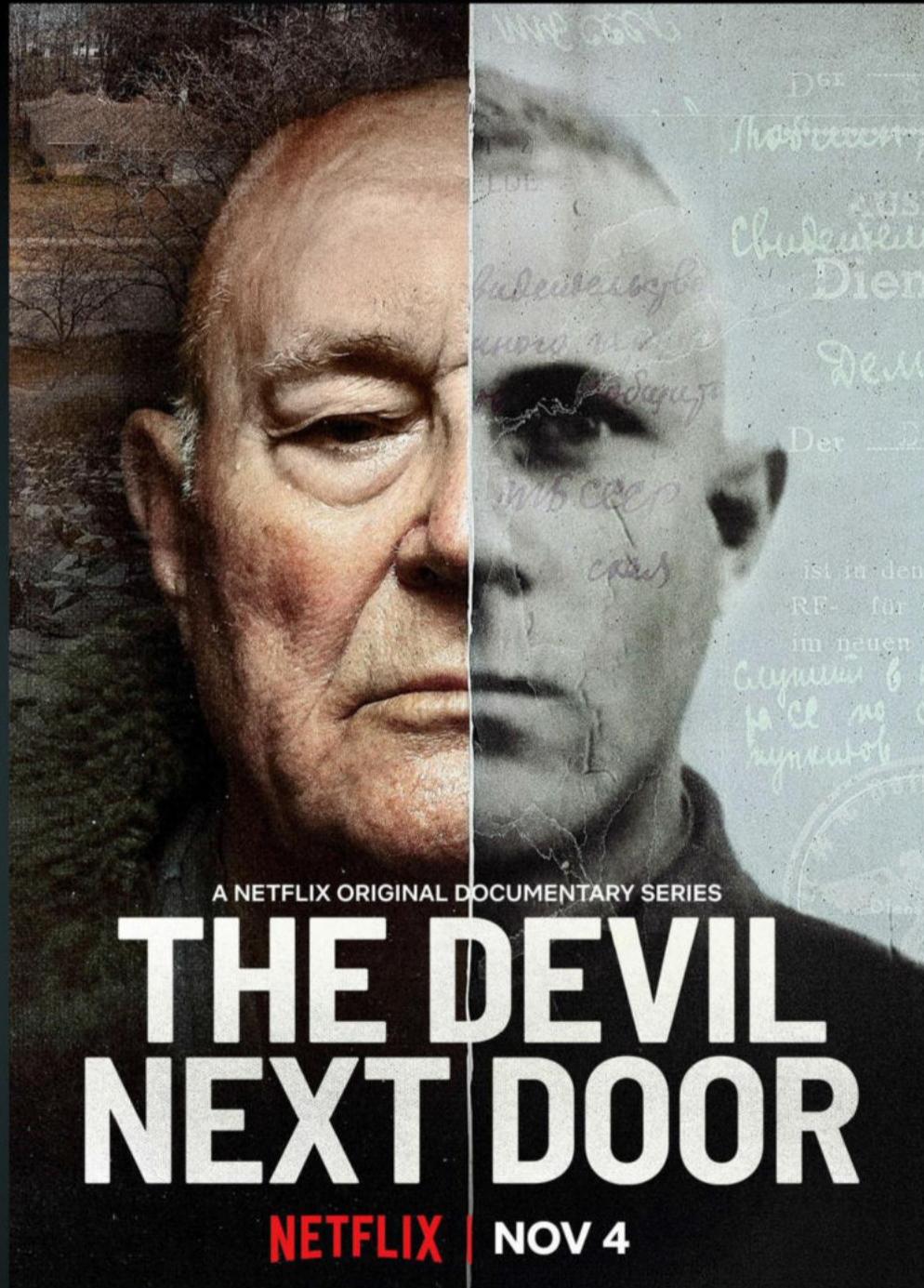
The case tried in Israel against John Demjanuk (1920-2012) turned out to be powered by the strangest irony. To his last breath the man protested his innocence as a victim of mistaken identity. Evidence unearthed after the fall of the Soviet Union points to Demjanuk, a former Ukrainian national who later became an American citizen, as spending his war years as a Trawniki guard stationed not at Treblinka, as first accused, but another Nazi death camp: Sobibór.

Reinventing himself after the Second World War as a hard-working Ford factory worker living the American dream, he was originally charged with being the monster known at Treblinka by Sonderkommandos as 'Ivan the Terrible'. To those who knew him back in Cleveland, Ohio, he was a churchgoer, caring father, good neighbour, a loving husband. Yet Treblinka survivors persistently told the world Demjanuk was the vicious beast who manned the modified trucks which pumped carbon monoxide into the gas chamber; who took pleasure in humiliating Jews as they faced imminent death. Eyewitnesses stated he sometimes mutilated people with a sword.

In crucial ways Yossi Bloch and Daniel Sivan's haunting five-part Netflix Original documentary, isn't about John Demjanuk at all. He's what film director Alfred Hitchcock called 'the MacGuffin' – the plot device which gets the ball rolling. *The Devil Next Door* hits emotionally the hardest in its reconstruction of the 1987-88 trial, detailing the psychological effect on Israeli citizens and how the names and reputations of Holocaust survivors were dragged through the mud. The war crimes trial was intended to bring a semblance of closure and vindication, but not the Demjanuk indictment. The mistake of the prosecution was to treat the hearing as a slam dunk, a dead cert. This wasn't to be an Eichmann rerun. There was enough doubt attached, enough murk, enough political game-playing, enough peculiarity, it afforded the defence team an opportunity to wage the battle for the truth in the fog of memory. What occurs, then, when the righteous cry for justice starts to look like a demand for vengeance at any cost? What happens when we question the memories of severely traumatised people? *The Devil Next Door* is exemplary documentary filmmaking featuring remarkable videotaped trial footage, archived television reports and new interviews with key players. The series is unafraid to ask uncomfortable questions, on both sides of the argument, while maintaining a compassionate approach.

**"EYEWITNESSES STATED HE SOMETIMES MUTILATED PEOPLE WITH A SWORD"**

Gripping like a vice from the start and fearlessly venturing into the darkest territory imaginable *The Devil Next Door* is history as a living and perpetual nightmare. It shows us how heavily disputed documents, the flourishing of conspiracy theories, anti-semitism, media hoopla and case-specific ambiguities combined to sorry effect. Convicted in 2011 by a Munich court of participating in the annihilation of 29,000 people at Sobibór, even here the viewer is presented with doubts. Nobody remembered him at the death camp nor could anyone describe any particular barbarous actions which would incriminate him. Again the cycle of unknowability whirls tauntingly. Was Demjanuk at Treblinka after all? MC



# NAZI WIVES THE WOMEN AT THE TOP OF HITLER'S GERMANY

A FASCINATING YET DISTURBING EXAMINATION OF SEVEN WIVES OF HITLER'S INFAMOUS HENCHMAN AND THEIR ROLES WITHIN THIRD REICH GERMANY

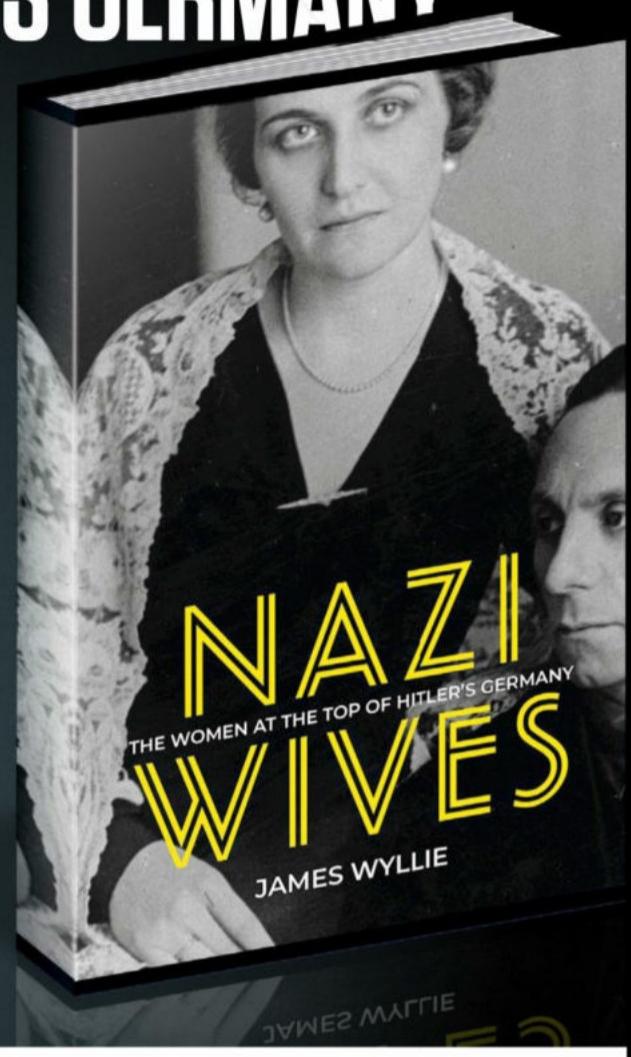
**Writer:** James Wyllie **Publisher:** The History Press **Price:** £20

Few will not have heard the infamous names of Herman Goering, Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich, Rudolf Hess and Martin Bormann. They are names that conjure up images of hatred, suffering and death. After all they were all a part of Hitler's intimate and trusted inner circle of evil. However names which are far less well-known are those of their respective wives including Carin and Emmy, Magda, Margarete, Lina, Ilse, and Gerda. While Hitler's henchmen continue to fascinate professional and amateur historians alike, their wives remain largely aloof in the current literature of Third Reich history.

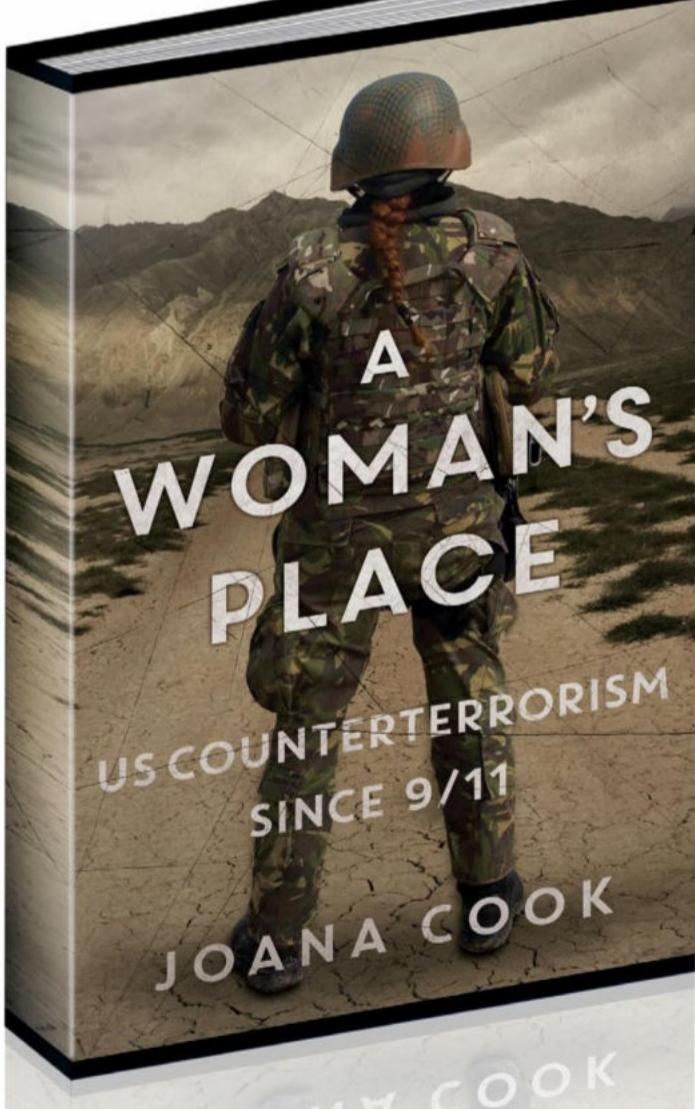
## "NONE SHOWED ANY SIGNS OF REMORSE IN THE WAR'S AFTERMATH"

Author and award-winning screenwriter James Wyllie has expertly examined the lives of seven leading Nazi wives who, like their husbands, found themselves at the very top of society in Hitler's Nazi Germany. Their individual stories were previously known to few, but Wyllie's fresh research has taken him to the archives of Europe examining many first-hand accounts and other contemporary sources to bring us an extremely interesting yet equally disturbing account of the lives of these Nazi women. Particularly chilling is the fact that, of those who survived the war, none showed any signs of remorse in the war's aftermath, even long after the deaths of their husbands.

Exceptionally well researched and written, Wyllie has produced an engrossing book that presents the reader with a hitherto little-known aspect of the Nazi elite. It will appeal to both serious historians and Second World War enthusiasts alike, and even those with just a passing interest in Third Reich history. **MS**



# A WOMAN'S PLACE



THE STORY OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN US COUNTERTERRORISM SINCE 9/11 IN BOTH THE MIDDLE EAST AND AT HOME

**Author:** Joana Cook **Publisher:** Hurst **Price:** £45.00

There is a common stereotype of counterterrorism as the exclusive domain of gnarly armed-to-the-teeth men in combat gear. Joana Cook dispels that myth by revealing how women have become visible in the Global War on Terror since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the US. The author has conducted extensive interviews with women who have chosen this role and she examines US counterterrorism practice in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen. On the other side of the story Cook investigates the impact women in Al-Qaeda and ISIS have had on US antiterrorist policies.

US government agencies have been increasingly engaging women in their efforts to combat terrorist insurgents. An outstanding example is Team Lioness, established in Iraq in 2003 with units of servicewomen tasked with engaging with and searching local women as part of support services to all-male combat units. Other initiatives included training an all-female elite counterterrorism unit in Yemen in 2006 and female Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan to help facilitate raids on terrorist targets. The author also brings to light the expansive role of women in terrorist groups, like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Boko Haram and within Al-Qaeda itself.

Cook maintains that women will continue to be engaged in future efforts as agents and partners in this work. "The broader environment that now shapes how the next generation perceives terrorism and counterterrorism," she says, "is a world apart from that of their previous one."

The book stands as a valuable tool for understanding the often surprising presence of women in combatting the scourge of jihadist terrorism, which Cook believes will remain with us for two to three decades to come. **JS**

# THE GLORIOUS FIRST OF JUNE 1794

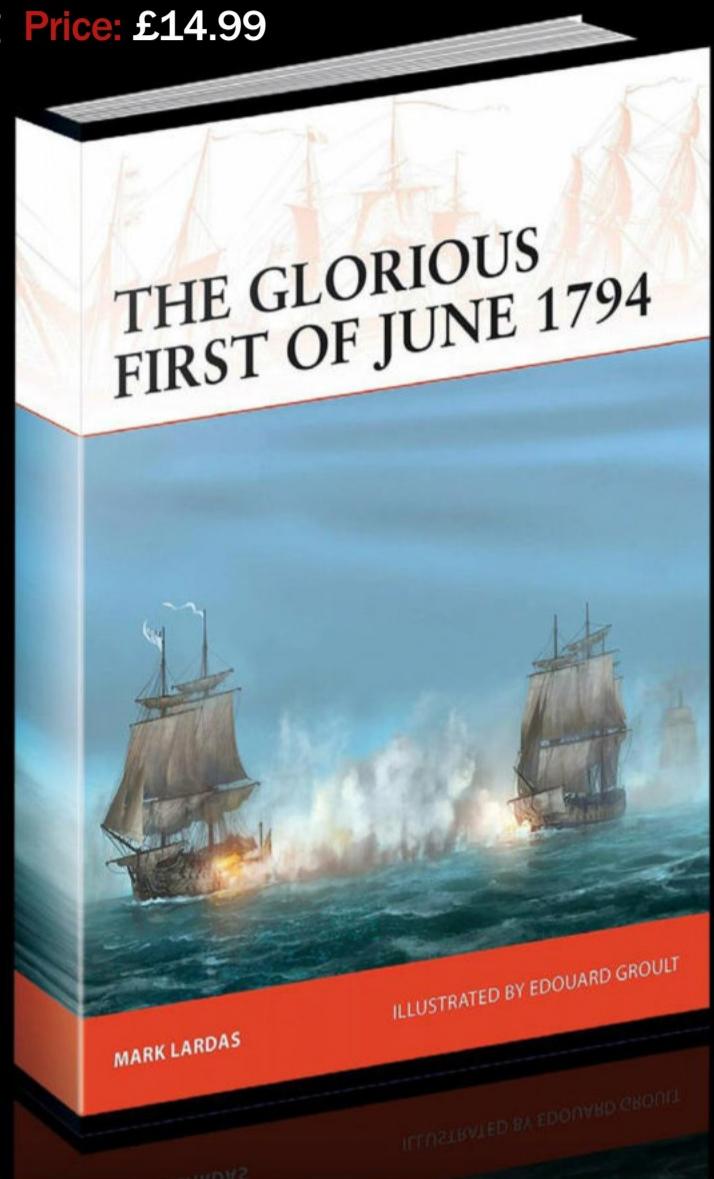
AN EXPERTLY WRITTEN AND BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED ACCOUNT OF ONE OF BRITAIN'S MOST CELEBRATED NAVAL ACTIONS OF THE AGE OF SAIL

**Writer:** Mark Lardas **Artist:** Edouard Groult **Publisher:** Osprey Publishing **Price:** £14.99

Although not remembered to quite the same extent as the later Battle of Trafalgar (1805) the Glorious First of June – sometimes called the Fourth Battle of Ushant – was the largest naval action fought by Britain and France during the French Revolutionary Wars. The battle technically ended in a British victory, but the French were able to draw away the British fleet to enable an important merchant convoy to safely reach Brest. It also proved the French navy was still an effective fighting force in the wake of the bloody French Revolution that had ruthlessly executed many senior French naval officers.

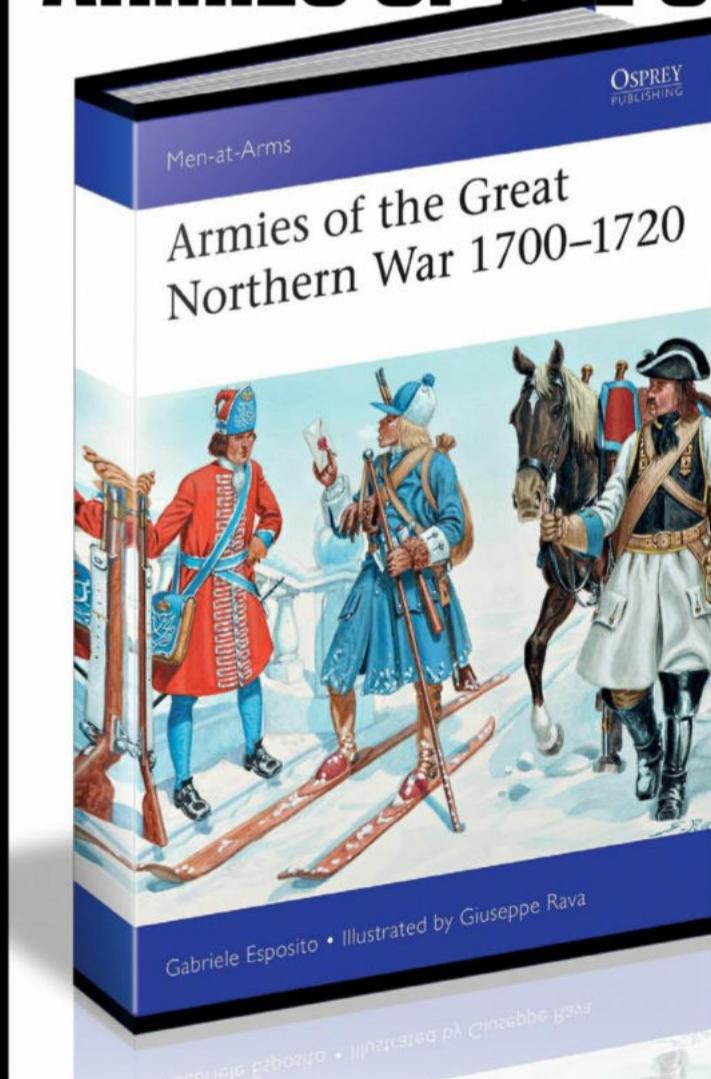
Author Mark Lardas has expertly explored this fascinating story in under 100 pages, presenting the reader with a succinct yet highly informative account. Following the typical Osprey Campaign series format the book provides a detailed introduction which examines the background to the battle followed by a useful chronology. Next it looks at the opposing commanders, the navies and their respective plans before delving into the detail of the action itself and its immediate aftermath. Finally the author provides a little interesting detail on the site of the battle, albeit in the grey Atlantic, and a useful further reading list.

Although there are more detailed accounts of the Glorious First of June available, this book acts as a great starting point for those new to the subject or others wishing for a recap. As such it will appeal to naval historians, wargamers and those with a more general interest in history. It is well researched, clearly written and superbly illustrated, containing some beautiful modern colour plates and period images, as well as easy to follow maps. **MS**



**"THE FRENCH NAVY WAS STILL AN EFFECTIVE FIGHTING FORCE IN THE WAKE OF THE BLOODY FRENCH REVOLUTION, WHICH HAD RUTHLESSLY EXECUTED MANY SENIOR FRENCH NAVAL OFFICERS"**

## ARMIES OF THE GREAT NORTHERN WAR 1700-1720



A HIGHLY DETAILED AND BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED BOOK THAT EXAMINES THE ARMIES OF ONE OF EUROPE'S MOST SIGNIFICANT 18TH CENTURY CONFLICTS

**Writer:** Gabriele Esposito **Artist:** Giuseppe Rava  
**Publisher:** Osprey Publishing **Price:** £11.99

The Great Northern War of 1700-1720, often overshadowed by the simultaneous War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), is of great importance to Baltic history. Indeed, as the author rightly points out, it led to the destruction of the Swedish empire and the transformation of Russia under Tsar Peter the Great into a major European player.

As part of Osprey's excellent Men-At-Arms series, *Armies Of The Great Northern War 1700-1720* is not a history of the conflict itself, although the author provides a succinct introduction to the subject and a detailed chronology to set the scene. Rather it focuses on the armies of the main protagonists including Russian, Swedish, Saxon, Polish, Lithuanian, Danish, Norwegian, Hanoverian, Prussian, Holstein, Cossacks, Tatars and the Danubian Principalities.

While each army varies, different types of troops are considered such as regular line infantry, cavalry, artillery, militia, volunteers and other reserves. Also examined are issues such as wartime changes, private armies, foreign troops in service, garrison and security troops.

Despite it being a short book (under 50 pages) it is quite remarkable how much detail has been squeezed into it. The book is also beautifully illustrated with both period black and white images and modern colour plates, the latter of which are incredible in their detail. Towards the end of the book is a plate commentaries section giving the reader further details regarding each illustration.

It is clear the author knows their history, which is complemented by the high-quality illustrations. The book will appeal to both military historians and wargamers alike, or even those with just a passing interest. **MS**

# THE ELITE

SPECIAL FORCES THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE DEPLOYED THEIR HIGHLY SPECIALISED SKILLS TO TAKE ON THE MOST HAZARDOUS MILITARY OPERATIONS

**Writer:** Sir Ranulph Fiennes **Publisher:** Simon & Schuster **Price:** £20.00

Sir Ranulph Fiennes's awareness and admiration for elite fighting units was inspired by the father he never knew, an officer of the Royal Scots Greys, the unit that switched from horses to tanks in the Second World War and led these mechanical beasts in the D-Day Normandy advance. It was, the author tells us, in part his father's courageous wartime deeds that inspired him to write the book.

Beginning his narrative in the book with the exploits of the ancient Persians, Fiennes tells of Xerxes's accession to the throne in 486 BC and this monarch's obsession with the conquest of Greece. In this offensive, the might of Xerxes's army came up against 300 rather formidable Spartan fighters.

Ancient Sparta may not spring to mind as the birthplace of the fighting units we today know as Special Forces. Fiennes, himself a former Special Air Services (SAS) officer, tells in his book how 5,000 years ago Spartan warriors who displayed exceptional fighting and survival skills were rewarded with entry into the elite special forces known as the '300'. "If the 300 was not prize enough," the author says, "there was the chance to become a member of the so-called Krypteia, the most elite Spartan military group of all."

Fiennes goes into fascinating and thoroughly-researched detail about the exploits of celebrated contemporary forces like his own SAS as well as the US Green Berets and Navy Seals. He also delves into the history of heroic units, many of which operated in the shadows, such as the medieval assassins of the mountains of Persia and Syria and the feared Knights Templar who ranked among the most skilled fighting units in the Crusades. The author probes the reasons behind their successes and failures with many notorious conflicts often being decided by these select units facing off against one other.

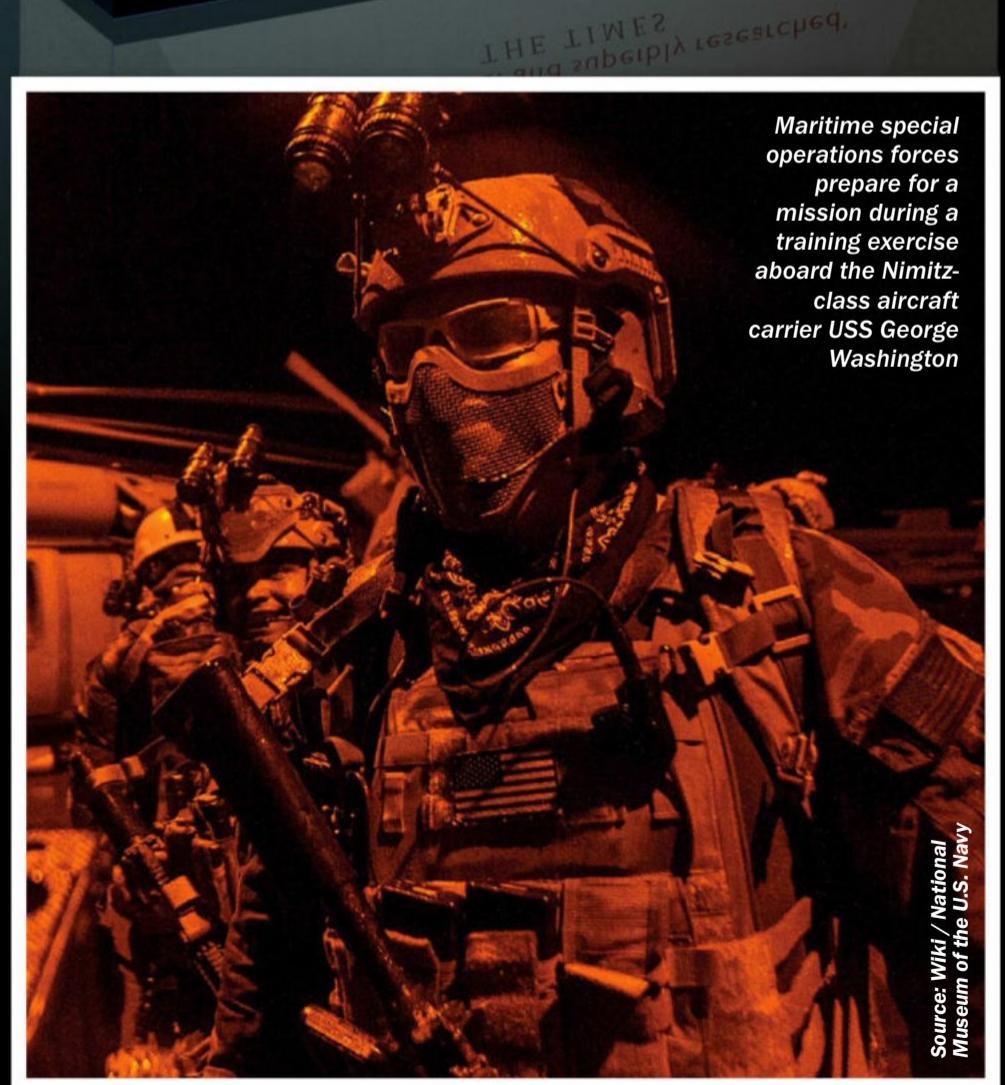
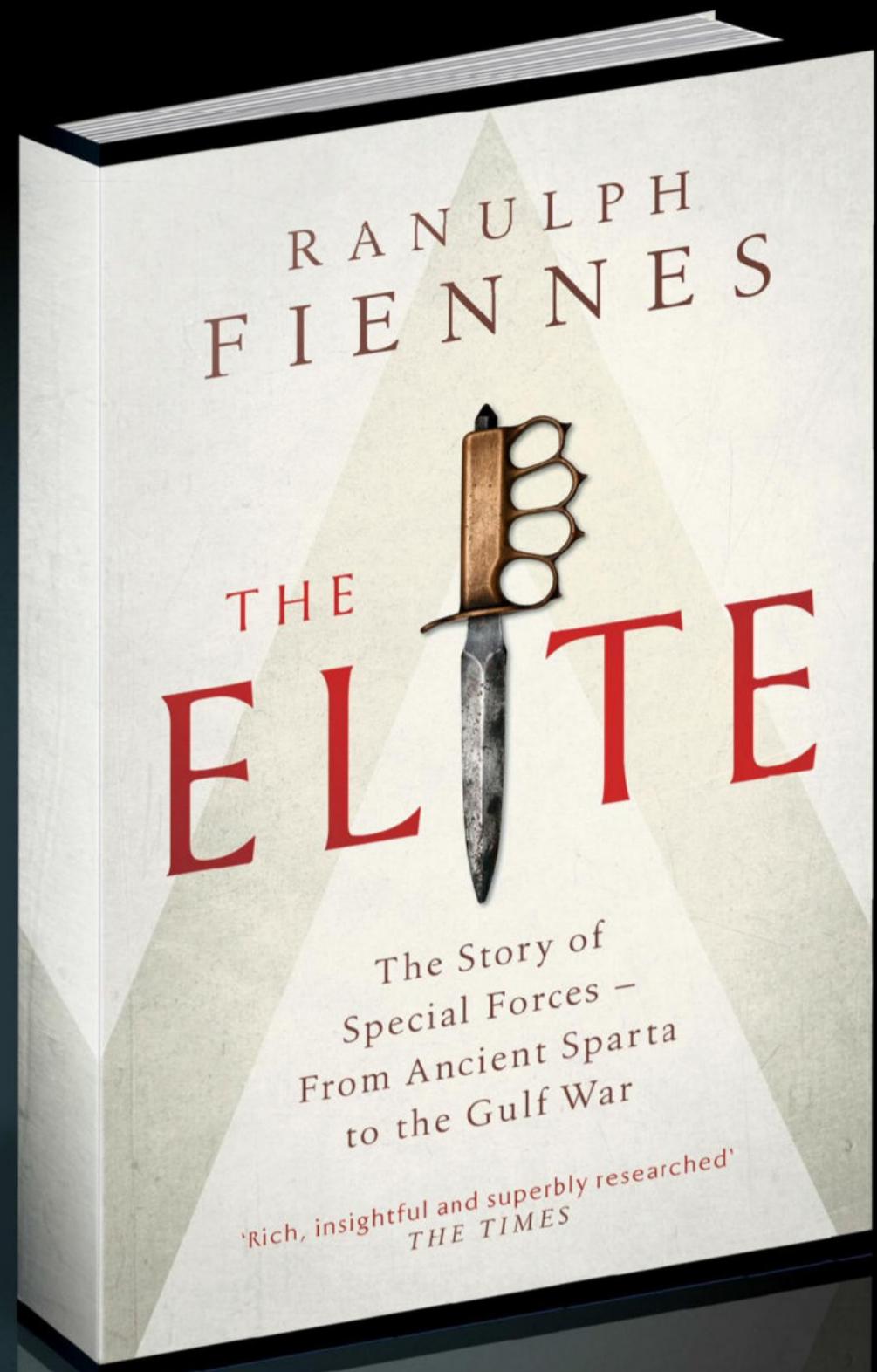
Elite special forces remain a key force in shaping the world in which we live, Fiennes affirms, though their roles have changed in recent years. This is part of the shifting nature of warfare, which, as we have seen in numerous campaigns, relies less on deploying boots on the ground and more on special operations-type tactics.

Consider the role of the Green Berets in Afghanistan: lacking the manpower to overthrow the Taliban on their own, they nevertheless possessed the training to build trust and extract information crucial to overthrowing the Taliban regime. "One minute the team would be on horseback, the next they would be using cutting-edge technology to guide bombs from 20,000 feet," Fiennes explains.

A comparatively recent feature has been the rise in so-called 'professional security companies', in essence the use of mercenaries attracting elite soldiers to carry out the tasks of standing armies. One advantage of this system is its cost-effectiveness, which makes it attractive to governments and military leaders alike who acknowledge the high cost of training and maintaining special forces units.

"Whatever the future holds," Fiennes says, "I am certain that, in some capacity, the military will always require a specially trained team of elite human beings who, with all of their guts and perseverance, are capable of staring danger in the face and pulling off the impossible." JS

**"ONE MINUTE THE TEAM WOULD BE ON HORSEBACK, THE NEXT THEY WOULD BE USING CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY TO GUIDE BOMBS FROM 20,000 FEET"**





WWII THIS MONTH...

# DECEMBER 1939

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War every issue **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place each month of the conflict



Source: Wikimedia Commons

## GRAF SPEE'S LAST GASP

After a long cat-and-mouse chase with the British Navy the captain of the German cruiser Admiral Graf Spee finally conceded defeat. Captain Hans Langsdorff had successfully fought off several smaller British cruisers for days in the South Atlantic and had found earlier success hunting down British merchant shipping earlier in the year. However in the early hours of 13 December Admiral Graf Spee was damaged while battling with HMS Exeter, HMS Achilles and HMS Ajax forcing the German ship to retreat to the port of Montevideo. Captain Langsdorff believed a larger number of British vessels were en route to attack again – rather than let his ship be taken intact, he scuttled it on 17 December.

## HELIGOLAND HEROES

Air crew returned from their recent raid over the North Sea give the thumbs up after their safe return to England. Despite their optimism British bombing missions over Heligoland this month were a failure – on 18 December over half the 22 Wellington bombers sent out were destroyed by enemy aircraft. Bomber Command was under the impression that the Wellington's armour and armament protection, including three machine-gun turrets, would be enough to fend off fighter attacks.

Image: Getty

## OH CANADA!

Canadian troops conduct bayonet practice in the snow on 30 December. The first Canadian soldiers crossed the Atlantic in the winter of 1939 before beginning training in England and Scotland. Most troops of the Canadian Army were based in Aldershot, southern England.



Image: Getty

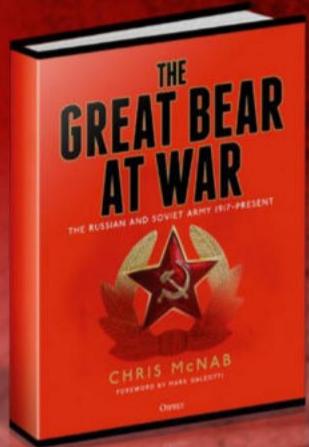
## NAZI NEW YEAR'S

Adolf Hitler poses with guests at his residence, the Berghof, near Berchtesgaden, for New Year's celebrations. Front row left to right: Wilhelm Brückner (Hitler's chief adjutant), Christa Schröder (Hitler's secretary), Eva Braun, Adolf Hitler, Gretl Braun (Eva's sister), Adolf Wagner (Gauleiter of Munich) and Otto Dietrich (press chief). Second row, left to right: Gerda Daranowski (Hitler's secretary), Margarete Speer, Martin Bormann, Dr Karl Brandt and Heinrich Hoffmann. Back row, left to right: Dr Theo Morell (Hitler's personal physician), Hannelore Morell, Karl-Jesko von Puttkamer (Hitler's naval adjutant), Gerda Bormann, Max Wünsche (one of Hitler's SS aides) and Heinrich Heim (from Bormann's staff).



Image: Getty

# ARMOURED TRACKS OF THE GREAT BEAR



This new release chronicles the history of Russian and Soviet AFVs from World War I to the present

**F**rom the chaos of the revolution to the political manoeuvring of the Cold War, Russian and Soviet armed forces have shaped the future not only of Russia but of countless other countries around the globe. Central to these forces have been the many variants of armoured fighting vehicles which have played a

formidable role in wars and insurgencies in which Russia has participated over the last turbulent century.

These images and the accompanying text are drawn from the book *The Great Bear At War: The Russian And Soviet Army 1917-Present*, edited by Chris McNab, published by Osprey Publishing and on sale now. ([www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com)).



Image: Central Museum of the Armed Forces, Moscow via [www.Stavka.org.uk](http://www.Stavka.org.uk)

## WORLD WAR I

Early examples of armoured cars operated by the Red Army, pictured in 1918. Such vehicles would have provided armoured protection against only up to rifle-calibre ammunition; they could be obliterated by a common field artillery or mortar shell.

**"RUSSIAN AND SOVIET ARMED FORCES HAVE SHAPED THE FUTURE NOT ONLY OF RUSSIA BUT OF COUNTLESS OTHER COUNTRIES AROUND THE GLOBE"**

## WORLD WAR II

An M1931 twin-turreted T26 tank conducts manoeuvres during a training exercise in August 1934. Such light and vulnerable vehicles would later be destroyed in their thousands during Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.



With a lack of infantry armoured fighting vehicles during the early years of World War II the Soviet Army frequently transported troops into battle riding on the outside of tanks. Such a position was appallingly vulnerable to German machine-gun fire.



*Images: Courtesy of the Central Museum of the Armed Forces, Moscow via www.Stavka.org.uk*

## COLD WAR ARMY

A Soviet tank driver guides his vehicle forward. The distinctive padded fabric helmet, with built-in sections for the radio earpieces, had no ballistic protection at all, unlike many of the armoured vehicle helmets developed for NATO crews at this time.



*Image: Cody/AirSealAnd*



*Image: Cody/AirSealAnd*

**Left:** A Soviet naval infantryman poses in front of his PT-76 tank, c.1989. The PT-76 was a fully amphibious light tank, first introduced into Soviet service in 1951 for reconnaissance and fire support roles.

**Below:** The Strela-10 (SA-13 Gopher) is a mobile short-range SAM system introduced into the Soviet armed forces in 1976. The four missiles – which are visually aimed and optical/infrared-guided – are mounted on the back of an MT-LB multi-purpose tracked vehicle.



*Image: Cody/AirSealAnd*

## ARMOURED TRACKS OF THE GREAT BEAR



The Soviet May Day parades were an opportunity for the NATO alliance to view some of the latest kit and equipment in Soviet service. In this 1985 parade we see 2S3 Akatsiya self-propelled guns.



Images: Cody/AirSealLand

The ASU-85 self-propelled gun (pictured) was designed specifically for airborne deployment; at a total weight of 15.5 tonnes the vehicle was capable of being transported inside fixed-wing transport aircraft and also carried as a slung load beneath heavy lift helicopters.



### AFGHANISTAN 1979-89

This view of a Soviet mechanised patrol illustrates the stark reality of Afghanistan's winter terrain. The Soviet rifleman depended on his personnel carrier both for his own transport and for his equipment that the vehicle conveyed.

Image: Cody/AirSealLand

### MODERN DAY

The T-14 Armata represents the future of Russia's armoured thinking. It is armed with a 125mm smoothbore cannon and is fitted with the Malachit dual-explosive reactive armour (ERA) system on the front, sides, and top.

Image: Vitaly V. Kuzmin/CC-BY-SA 4.0

**"THE T-14 ARMATA REPRESENTS THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA'S ARMOURED THINKING"**



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NEXT MONTH

# BODENPLATTE LAST STAND OF THE LUFTWAFFE

75 years ago Germany launched one last desperate operation to defeat the Allied air superiority. In issue 76: discover how this devastating final airborne clash unfolded

Image: Alamy

Image: Getty

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Images: Alamy

**Right:** An electrotype copy of the helmet was made to be displayed in the British Museum while the original resides in the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad

**Above:** The 'War Frieze' from the Standard of Ur was also found in the Royal Cemetery. This wooden box depicts a victorious king, chariots, wounded prisoners and a battle scene

# MESKALAMDUG'S WAR HELMET

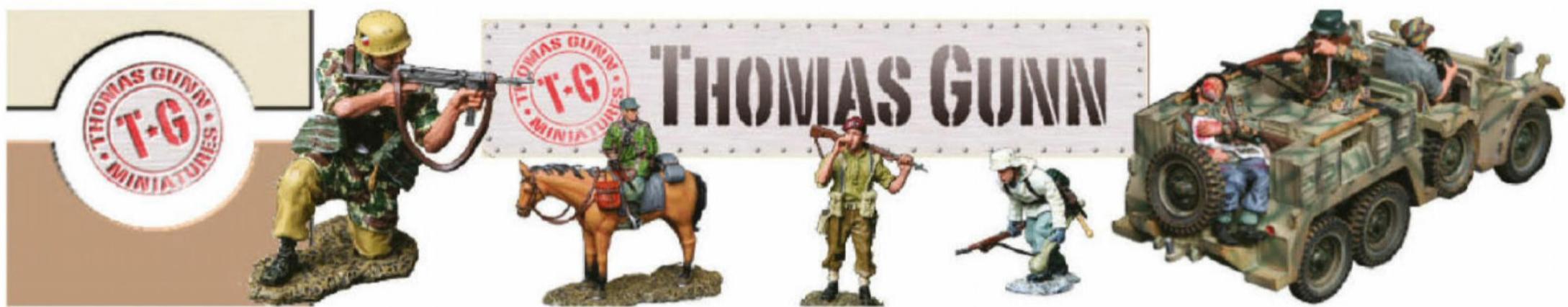
This remarkable survival from Ancient Mesopotamia probably belonged to a warrior ruler from the kingdom of Kish

In archaeological terms, 1922 was a momentous time when Howard Carter famously discovered the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen. However, in the same year other treasures were discovered in southern Iraq by British archaeologist Leonard Woolley who discovered the Royal Cemetery at Ur. Approximately 2,000 graves were unearthed, including 16 that were designated as 'royal' due to the spectacular finds that lay inside them. These objects included gold beads, bronze relics, cylinder seals, musical instruments and artefacts associated with mass ritual.

This gold helmet was found in a tomb of a young man dated from 2,600-2,500 BCE that was designated as 'PG 755'. Measuring 2.5 x 1.5 metres, Woolley did not include PG 755 as a royal tomb because there was no chamber or buried retainers but its artefacts were of a regal nature. Gold and silver lamps were found in the coffin along with axe heads and jewellery. The helmet and a gold bowl were inscribed with the name 'Meskalamdug' but Woolley was unsure of his identity.

Meskalamdug was the king of Kish whose son Mesannepada was the initial monarch of

the First Dynasty of Ur. Woolley speculated that the man in the grave might have been King Meskalamdug's grandson who bore the same name and was buried with a legacy from his grandfather. The helmet itself has holes around its border, which suggests that another piece was normally affixed. This could have been a mask of a beard that was similar in appearance to a helmet belonging to Sargon the Great, King of Akkad. The helmet is clearly designed to have a martial appearance although whether it was used in combat or for ceremonial purposes will probably never be known.



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